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Nocturne at the Majestic

A romantic adventure in the life of Nina Malpas

By ARNOLD BENNETT

IN the daily strenuous life of a great hotel there are periods during which its bewildering activities slacken, and the vast organism seems to be under the influence of an opiate. Such a period recurs after dinner when the guests are pre-occupied by the mysterious processes of digestion in the drawing-rooms or smoking-rooms or in the stalls of a theatre. On the evening of this nocturne the well-known circular entrance-hall of the Majestic, with its tessellated pavement, its malachite pillars, its Persian rugs, its lounges, and its renowned stuffed bears at the foot of the grand stairway, was for the moment deserted save by the head hall-porter and the head night-porter and the girl in the bureau. It was a quarter-to-nine, and the head hall-porter was abdicating his pagoda to the head night-porter, and telling him the necessary secrets of the day. These two lords, before whom the motley panorama of human existence was continually being unrolled, held a portentous confabulation night and morning. They had no illusions; they knew life. Shakespeare himself might have listened to them with advantage.

The girl in the bureau, like a beautiful and languishing animal in its cage, leaned against her window, and looked between two pillars at the magnificent lords. She was too far off to catch their talk, and, indeed, she watched them absently in a reverie induced by the sweet melancholy of the summer twilight, by the torpidity of the hour, and by the prospect of the next day, which was her day off. The liveried functionaries ignored her, probably scorned her as a mere pretty little morsel. Nevertheless, she was the centre of energy, not they. If money were payable, she was the person to receive it; if a customer wanted a room, she would choose it; and the lords had to call her "miss." The immense and splendid hotel pulsed round this simple heart hidden under a white blouse. Especially in summer, her presence and the presence of her companions in the bureau (but to-night she was alone) ministered to the satisfaction of male guests, whose cruel but profoundly human instincts found pleasure in the fact that, no matter when they came in from their wanderings, the pretty captives were always there in the bureau, smiling welcome, puzzling stupid little brains and puckering pale brows over enormous ledgers, twittering borrowed facetiousness from rosy mouths, and smoothing out seductive toilettes with long thin hands that were made for ring and bracelet and rudder-lines, and not a bit for the pen and the ruler.

The pretty thing despised of the functionaries corresponded almost exactly in appearance to the typical bureau girl. She was moderately tall; she had a good slim figure, all pleasant curves, flaxen hair and plenty of it, and a dainty, rather expressionless

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face; the ears and mouth were very small, the eyes large and blue, the nose so-so, the cheeks and forehead of an equal ivory pallor, the chin trifling, with a crease under the lower lip and a rich convexity springing out from below the crease. The extremities of the full lips were nearly always drawn up in a smile, mechanical, but infallibly attractive. The hair was of an orthodox frizziness. You would have said she was a nice, kind, good-natured girl, flirtatious but correct, well adapted to adorn the dogcart on Sundays.

This was Nina, foolish Nina, aged twenty-one. In her reverie the entire Hotel Majestic weighed on her; she had a more than adequate sense of her own solitary importance in the bureau, and stirring obscurely beneath that consciousness were the deep ineradicable longings of a poor pretty girl for heaps of money, endless luxury of finery and chocolates, and sentimental silken dalliance.

Suddenly a stranger entered the hall. His advent seemed to wake the place out of the trance into which it had fallen. The nocturne had begun. Nina straightened herself and intensified her eternal smile. The two porters became military, and smiled with a special and peculiar urbanity. Several lesser but still lordly functionaries appeared among the pillars; a page-boy emerged by magic from the region of the chimney-piece like Mephistopheles in Faust's study; and some guests of both sexes strolled chattering across the tessellated pavement as they passed from one wing of the hotel to the other.

"How do, Tom?" said the stranger, grasping the hand of the head hall-porter, and nodding to the head night-porter.

His voice showed that he was an American, and his demeanour that he was one of those experienced, wealthy, and kindly travellers who know the Christian names of all the hall-porters in the world, and have the trick of securing their intimacy and fealty. He wore a blue suit and a light grey wide-awake, and his fine moustache was grizzled. In his left hand he carried a brown bag.

"Nicely, thank you, sir," replied Tom. "How are you, sir?"

"Oh, about six and six."

Whereupon both porters laughed heartily.

Tom escorted him to the bureau, and tried to relieve him of his bag. Inferior lords escorted Tom.

"I guess I'll keep the grip," said the stranger. "Mr. Pank will be around with some more baggage pretty soon. We've expressed the rest on to the steamer. Well, my dear," he went on, turning to Nina, "you're a fresh face here."

He looked her steadily in the eyes.

"Yes, I am," she said, conquered instantly.

Radiant and triumphant, the man brought good-humour into every face, like some wonderful combination of the sun and the sea-breeze.

"Give me two bedrooms and a parlour, please," he commanded.

"First floor?" asked Nina prettily.

"First floor! Well—I should say! *And* on the Strand, my dear."

She bent over her ledgers, blushing.

"Send someone to the 'phone, Tom, and let 'em put me on to the Regency, will you?" said the stranger.

"Yes, sir. Samuels, go and ring up the Regency Theatre—quick!"

Swift departure of a lord.

"And ask Alphonse to come up to my bedroom in ten minutes from now," the stranger proceeded to Tom. "I shall want a dandy supper for fourteen at a quarter after eleven."

"Yes, sir. No dinner, sir?"

"No; we dined on the Pullman. Well, my dear, figured it out yet?"

"Numbers 102, 120, and 107," said Nina.

"Keys 102, 120, and 107," said Tom.

Swift departure of another lord to the pagoda.

"How much?" demanded the stranger.

"The bedrooms are twenty-five shillings, and the sitting-room two guineas."

"I guess Mr. Pank won't mind that. Hallo, Pank, you're here! I'm through. Your number's 102 or 120, which you fancy. Just going to the 'phone a minute, and then I'll join you upstairs."

Mr. Pank was a younger man, possessing a thin, astute, intellectual face. He walked into the hall with noticeable deliberation. His travelling costume was faultless, but from beneath his straw hat his black hair sprouted in a somewhat peculiar fashion over his broad forehead. He smiled lazily and shrewdly, and without a word disappeared into a lift. Two large portmanteaux accompanied him.

Presently the elder stranger could be heard battling with the obstinate idiosyncrasies of a London telephone.

"You haven't registered," Nina called

to him in her tremulous, delicate, captivating voice, as he came out of the telephone-box.

He advanced to sign, and, taking a pen and leaning on the front of the bureau, wrote in the visitor's book, in a careful, legible hand: "Lionel Belmont, New York." Having thus written, and still resting on the right elbow, he raised his right hand a little and waved the pen like a delicious menace to Nina.

"Mr. Pank hasn't registered, either," he said slowly, with a charming affectation of solemnity, as though accusing Mr. Pank of some appalling crime.

Nina laughed timidly as she pushed his room-ticket across the page of the big book. She thought that Mr. Lionel Belmont was perfectly delightful.

"No, he hasn't," she said, trying also to be arch; "but he must."

At that moment she happened to glance at the right hand of Mr. Belmont. In the brilliance of the electric light she could see the fair skin of the wrist and fore-arm within the whiteness of his shirt-sleeve. She stared at what she saw, every muscle tense.

"I guess you can round up Mr. Pank yourself, my dear, later on," said Lionel Belmont, and turned quickly away, intent on the next thing.

He did not notice that her large eyes had grown larger and her pale face paler. In another moment the hall was deserted again. Mr. Belmont had ascended in the lift, Tom had gone to his rest, and the head night-porter was concealed in the pagoda. Nina sank down limply on her stool, her nostrils twitching; she feared she was about to faint, but this final calamity did not occur. She had, nevertheless, experienced the greatest shock of her brief life, and the way of it was thus.

II

NINA MALPAS was born amid the embers of one of those fiery conjugal dramas which occur with romantic frequency in the provincial towns of the northern Midlands, where industrial conditions are such as to foster an independent spirit among women of the lower class generally, and where by long tradition "character" is allowed to exploit itself more freely than in the southern parts of our island. Lemuel Malpas was a dashing young commercial traveller, with what is known as "an agreeable address," in Bursley, one of the Five Towns, Staffordshire. On the strength of his dash he wooed and married the daughter of an hotel-keeper in the neighbouring town of Hanbridge. Six months after the wedding—in other words, at the most dangerous period of the connubial career—Mrs. Malpas's father died, and Mrs. Malpas became the absolute mistress of eight thousand pounds. Lemuel* had carefully foreseen this windfall, and wished to use the money in enterprises of the earthenware trade. Mrs. Malpas, pretty and vivacious, with a self-conceit hardened by the adulation of the saloon-bars, very decidedly thought otherwise. Her motto was, "What's yours is mine, but what's mine's my own." The difference was accentuated. Long mutual resistances were followed by reconciliations, which grew more and more transitory, and at length both recognised that the union, not founded on genuine affection, had been a mistake.

"Keep your d——d brass!" Lemuel exclaimed one morning, and he went off on a journey and forgot to come back. A curious letter dated from Liverpool wished his wife happiness, and informed her that, since she was well provided for, he had no scruples about leaving her. Mrs. Malpas was startled at first, but she soon perceived that Lemuel had done exactly what the brilliant and enterprising Lemuel might have been expected to do. She jerked up her doll's head, and ejaculated, "So much the better!"

A few weeks later she sold the furniture and took rooms in Scarborough, where, amid pleasurable surroundings, she determined to lead the joyous life of a grass-widow, free of all cares. Then, to her astonishment and disgust, Nina was born. She had not bargained for Nina. She found herself in the tiresome position of a mother whose explanations of her child lacked plausibility. One lodging-house keeper to whom she hazarded the statement that Lemuel was in Australia had saucily replied: "I thought maybe it was the North Pole he was gone to!"

This decided Mrs. Malpas. She returned suddenly to the Five Towns, where at least her reputation was secure. Only a week previously Lemuel had learnt indirectly that she had left their native

* This name is pronounced with the accent on the first syllable in the Five Towns.

district. He determined thenceforward to forget her completely. Mrs. Malpas's prettiness was of the fleeting sort. After Nina's birth she began to get stout and coarse, the nostalgia of the saloon-bar, the coffee-room, and the sanded portico overtook her. The Tiger at Bursley was for sale, a respectable commercial hotel, the best in the town. She purchased it, wines, omnibus connection, and all, and developed into a typical landlady in black silk and gold rings.

In the Tiger Nina was brought up. She was a pretty child from her earliest years, and received the caresses of all as a matter of course. She went to a good school, studied the piano, and learnt dancing, and at sixteen did her hair up. She did what she was told without fuss, being apparently of a lethargic temperament; she had all the money and all the clothes that her heart could desire; she was happy, and in her quiet way she deemed herself rather a considerable item in the world. When she was eighteen her mother died miserably of cancer, and it was discovered that the liabilities of Mrs. Malpas's estate exceeded its assets—and the Tiger mortgaged up to its value! The creditors were not angry; they attributed the state of affairs to illness and the absence of male control, and good-humouredly accepted what they could get.

None the less, Nina, the child of luxury and sloth, had to start life with several hundred pounds less than nothing. Of her father all trace had been long since lost. A place was found for her, and for over two years she saw the world from the office of a famous hotel in Doncaster. Her lethargy, and an invaluable gift of adapting herself to circumstances, saved her from any acute unhappiness in the Yorkshire town. Instinctively she ceased to remember the Tiger and the past splendours. (Equally, if she married a Duke instead of becoming a book-keeper, she would have ceased to remember the Tiger and past humility.) Then by good or ill fortune she had the offer of a situation at the Hotel Majestic, Strand, London. The Majestic and the sights thereof woke up the sleeping soul.

Before her death Mrs. Malpas had told Nina many things about the vanished Lemuel; among others, the curious detail that he had two small moles—one hairless, the other hirsute—close together on the under side of his right wrist. Nina had seen precisely such marks of identification on the right wrist of Mr. Lionel Belmont.

She was convinced that Lionel Belmont was her father. There could not be two men in the world so stamped by nature. She perceived that in changing his name he had chosen Lionel because of its similarity to Lemuel. She felt certain, too, that she had noticed vestiges of the Five Towns accent beneath his Americanisms. But apart from these reasons, she knew by a super-rational instinct that Lionel Belmont was her father; it was not the call of blood, but the positiveness of a woman asserting that a thing is so because she is sure it is so.

III

NINA was not of an imaginative disposition. The romance of this extraordinary encounter made no appeal to her. She was the sort of girl that constantly reads novelettes, and yet always, with fatigued scorn, refers to them as "silly." Stupid little Nina was intensely practical at heart, and it was the practical side of her father's reappearance that engaged her birdlike mind. She did not stop to reflect that truth is stranger than fiction. Her tiny heart was not agitated by any ecstatic ponderings upon the wonder and mystery of fate. She did not feel strangely drawn towards Lionel Belmont, nor did she feel that he supplied a something which had always been wanting to her.

On the other hand, her pride—and Nina was very proud—found much satisfaction in the fact that her father, having turned up, was so fine, handsome, dashing, good-humoured, and wealthy. It was well, and excellently well, and delicious, to have a father like that. The possession of such a father opened up vistas of a future so enticing and glorious that her present career became instantly loathsome to her.

It suddenly seemed impossible that she could have tolerated the existence of a hotel clerk for a single week. Her eyes were opened, and she saw, as many women have seen, that luxury was an absolute necessity to her. All her ideas soared by the magic swiftness of the beanstalk. And at the same time she was terribly afraid, unaccountably afraid, to confront Mr. Belmont and tell him that she was his Nina; he was entirely unaware that he had a Nina.

"I'm your daughter! I know by your moles!"

She whispered the words in her tiny

heart, and felt sure that she could never find courage to say them aloud to that great and important man. The announcement would be too monstrous, incredible, and absurd. People would laugh. He would laugh. And Nina could stand anything better than being laughed at. Even supposing she proved to him his paternity—she thought of the horridness of going through lawyers' offices—he might decline to recognise her. Or he might throw her fifty pounds a year, as one throws sixpence to an importunate crossing sweeper, to be rid of her. The United States existed in her mind chiefly as a country of highly-remarkable divorce laws, and she thought that Mr. Belmont might have married again. A fashionable Mrs. Belmont, and a dazzling Miss Belmont, aged possibly eighteen, might arrive, both of them steeped in all conceivable luxury, at any moment. Where would Nina be then, with her two-and-eleven-pence-halfpenny blouse from Glave's? . . .

Mr. Belmont, accompanied by Alphonse, the head-waiter in the *salle à manger*, descended in the lift and crossed the hall to the portico, where he stood talking for a few seconds. Mr. Belmont turned, and, as he conversed with Alphonse, gazed absently in the direction of the bureau. He looked straight through the pretty captive. After all, despite his superficial heartiness, she could be nothing to him—so rich, assertive, and truly important. A hansom was called for him, and he departed; she observed that he was in evening dress now.

No! Her cause was just; but it was too startling—that was what was the matter with it.

Then she told herself that she would write to Lionel Belmont. She would write a letter that night.

At nine-thirty she was off duty. She went upstairs to her perch in the roof, and sat on her bed for over two hours. Then she came down again to the bureau with some bluish notepaper and envelopes in her hand, and, in response to the surprised question of the pink-frocked colleague who had taken her place, she explained that she wanted to write a letter.

"You do look that bad, Miss Malpas," said the other girl, who made a speciality of compassion.

"Do I?" said Nina.

"Yes, you do. What have you got *on*, *now*, my poor dear?"

"What's that to you? I'll thank you to mind your own business, Miss Bella Perkins."

Usually Nina was not soon ruffled; but that night all her nerves were exasperated and exceedingly sensitive.

"Oh!" said the girl. "What price the Duchess of Doncaster? And I was just going to wish you a nice day to-morrow for your holiday, too."

Nina seated herself at the table to write the letter. An electric light burned almost directly over her frizzy head. She wrote a weak but legible and regular back-hand. She hated writing letters, partly because she was dubious about her spelling, and partly because of an obscure but irrepressible suspicion that her letters were of a necessity silly. She pondered for a long time, and then wrote: "Dear Mr. Belmont,—I venture——" She made a new start: "Dear Sir,—I hope you will not think me——" And a third attempt: "My Dear Father——" No! it was preposterous. It could no more be written than it could be said.

The situation was too much for simple Nina.

Suddenly the grand circular hall of the Majestic was filled with a clamour at once charming and fantastic. There was chattering of musical, gay American voices, pattering of elegant feet on the tessellated pavement, the unique incomparable sound of the *frou-frou* of many frocks; and above all this the rich tones of Mr. Lionel Belmont. Nina looked up and saw her radiant father the centre of a group of girls all young, all beautiful, all stylish, all with picture hats, all self-possessed, all sparkling, doubtless the recipients of the dandy supper.

Oh, how insignificant and homicidal Nina felt!

"Thirteen of you!" exclaimed Lionel Belmont, pulling his superb moustache. "Two to a hansom. I guess I'll want six and a half hansoms, boy."

There was an explosion of delicious laughter, and the page-boy grinned, ran off, and began whistling in the portico like a vexed locomotive. The thirteen fair, shepherded by Lionel Belmont, passed out into the murmurous summer night of the Strand. Cab after cab drove up, and Nina saw that her father, after filling each cab, paid each cabman. In three minutes the dream-like scene was over. Mr. Belmont re-entered the hotel, winked

humorously at the occupant of the pagoda, ignored the bureau, and departed to his rooms.

Nina ripped her inchoate letters into small pieces, and, with a tart good-night to Miss Bella Perkins, who was closing her ledgers, the hour being close upon twelve-thirty, she passed sedately, stiffly, as though in performance of some vestal's ritual, up the grand staircase. Turning to the right at the first landing, she traversed a long corridor which was no part of the route to her cubicle on the ninth floor. This corridor was lighted by glowing sparks, which hung on yellow cords from the central line of the ceiling; underfoot was a heavy but narrow crimson patterned carpet with a strip of polished oak parquet on either side of it. Exactly along the central line of the carpet Nina tripped, languorously, like an automaton, and exactly overhead glittered the line of electric sparks.

The corridor and the journey seemed to be interminable, and Nina on some inscrutable and mystic errand. At length she moved aside from the religious line, went into a service cabinet, and emerged with a small bunch of pass-keys. No. 107 was Lionel Belmont's sitting-room; No. 102, his bedroom, was opposite to 107. No. 108, another sitting-room, was, as Nina knew, unoccupied. She noiselessly let herself into No. 108, closed the door, and stood still. After a minute she switched on the light. These two rooms, Nos. 108 and 107, had once communicated, but, as space grew precious with the growing success of the Majestic, they had been finally separated, and the door between them locked and masked by furniture. By reason of the door, Nina could hear Lionel Belmont moving to and fro in No. 107. She listened for a long time. Then, involuntarily, she yawned with fatigue.

"How silly of me to be here!" she thought. "What good will this do me?"

She extinguished the light and opened the door to leave. At the same instant the door of No. 107, three feet off, opened. She drew back with a start of horror. Suppose she had collided with her father on the landing! Timorously she peered out, and saw Lionel Belmont, in his shirt-sleeves, disappear round the corner.

"He is going to talk with his friend Mr. Pank," Nina thought, knowing that No. 120 lay at some little distance round that corner.

Mr. Belmont had left the door of No. 107 slightly ajar. An unseen and terrifying force compelled Nina to venture into the corridor, and then to push the door of No. 107 wide open. The same force, not at all herself, quite beyond herself, seemed to impel her by the shoulders into the room. As she stood unmistakably within her father's private sitting-room, scared, breathing rapidly, inquisitive, she said to herself:

"I shall hear him coming back, and I can run out before he turns the corner of the corridor," and she kept her little pink ears alert.

She looked about the softly brilliant room, such an extravagant triumph of luxurious comfort as twenty years ago would have aroused comment even in Mayfair; but there were scores of similar rooms in the Majestic. No one thought twice of them. Her father's dress-coat was thrown arrogantly over a Louis Quatorze chair, and this careless flinging of the expensive shining coat across the gilded chair somehow gave Nina a more intimate appreciation of her father's grandeur and of the great and glorious life he led. She longed to recline indolently in a priceless tea-gown on the couch by the fireplace and issue orders . . . She approached the writing-table, littered with papers, documents, in scores and hundreds. To the left was a brown bag. It was locked, and very heavy, she thought. To the right was a pile of telegrams. She picked one up, and read:

Pank, Grand Hotel, Birmingham.—Why not burgle Hotel? Simplest most effective plan and solves all difficulties.—BELMONT.

She read it twice, crunched it in her left hand, and picked up another one:

Pank, Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool.—Your objection absurd. See safe in bureau at Majestic. Quite easy. Scene with girl second evening.—BELMONT.

The thing flashed blindingly upon her. Her father and Mr. Pank belonged to the swell mob of which she had heard and seen so much at Doncaster. She at once became the excessively knowing and suspicious hotel employée, to whom every stranger is a rogue until he has proved the contrary. Had she lived through three St. Leger weeks for nothing? At the hotel at Doncaster, what they didn't know about thieves and sharpers was not knowledge. The landlord kept a loaded revolver in his desk there during the week. And she herself had been provided with a whistle

which she was to blow at the slightest sign of a row; she had blown it once, and seven policemen had appeared within thirty seconds. The landlord used to tell tales of masterly and huge scoundrelism that would make Charles Peace turn in his grave. And the landlord had ever insisted that no one, no one at all, could always distinguish with certainty between a real gent and a swell-mobsman.

So her father and Mr. Pank had deceived everyone in the hotel except herself, and they meant to rob the safe in the bureau to-morrow night. Of course, Mr. Lionel Belmont was a villain, or he would not have deserted her poor dear mother; it was annoying, but indubitable .... Even now he was maturing his plans round the corner with that Mr. Pank .... Burglars always went about in shirt-sleeves ... The brown bag contained the tools ....

The shock was frightful, disastrous, tragic; but it had solved the situation by destroying it. Practically, Nina no longer had a father. He had existed for about four hours as a magnificent reality, full of possibilities; he now ceased to be recognisable.

She was about to pick up a third telegram when a slight noise caused her to turn swiftly; she had forgotten to keep her little pink ears alert. Her father stood in the doorway. He was certainly the victim of some extraordinary emotion; his face worked; he seemed at a loss what to do or say; he seemed pained, confused, even astounded. Simple, foolish Nina had upset the balance of his equations.

Then he resumed his self-control and came forward into the room with a smile intended to be airy. Meanwhile, Nina had not moved. One is inclined to pity the artless and defenceless girl in this midnight duel of wits with a shrewd, resourceful and unscrupulous man of the world. But one's pity should not be lavished on an undeserving object. Though Nina trembled she was mistress of herself. She knew just where she was, and just how to behave. She was as impregnable as Gibraltar.

"Well," said Mr. Lionel Belmont, genially gazing at her pose, "you do put snap into it, any way."

"Into what?" she was about to enquire, but prudently she held her tongue. Drawing herself up with a gesture of an offended and unapproachable queen, the little thing sailed past him, close past her own father, and so out of the room.

"Say!" she heard him remark: "let's straighten this thing out, eh?"

But she heroically ignored him, thinking the while that, with all his sins, he was attractive enough. She still held the first telegram in her long, thin fingers.

So ended the nocturne.

IV

AT five o'clock next morning Nina's trifling nose was pressed against the window-pane of her cubicle. In the enormous slate roof of the Majestic are three rows of round windows, like portholes. Out of the highest one, at the extremity of the left wing, Nina looked. From thence she could see five other vast hotels, and the yard of Charing Cross Station, with three night-cabs drawn up to the kerb, and a red van of W. H. Smith & Son disappearing into the station. The Strand was quite empty. It was a strange world of sleep and greyness and disillusion. Within a couple of hundred yards or so of her thousands of people lay asleep, and they would all soon wake into the disillusion, and the Strand would wake, and the first omnibus of all the omnibuses would come along. . . .

Never had simple Nina felt so sad and weary. She was determined to give up her father. She was bound to tell the manager of her discovery, for Nina was an honest servant, and she was piqued in her honesty. No one should know that Lionel Belmont was her father. . . . She saw before her the task of forgetting him and forgetting the rich dreams of which he had been the origin. She was once more a book-keeper with no prospects.

At eight she saw the manager in the managerial room. Mr. Reuben was a young Jew, aged about thirty-four, with a cold but indestructibly polite manner. He was a great man, and knew it; he had almost invented the Majestic.

She told him her news; it was impossible for foolish Nina to conceal her righteousness and her sense of importance.

"Whom did you say, Miss Malpas?" asked Mr. Reuben.

"Mr. Lionel Belmont—at least, that's what he calls himself."

"Calls himself, Miss Malpas?"

"Here's one of the telegrams."

Mr. Reuben read it, looked at little Nina, and smiled; he never laughed.

"Is it possible, Miss Malpas," said he, "that you don't know who Mr. Belmont and Mr. Pank are?" And then, as she shook her head, he continued in his impassive, precise way: "Mr. Belmont is one of the principal theatrical managers in the United States. Mr. Pank is one of the principal playwrights in the United States. Mr. Pank's melodrama 'Nebraska' is now being played at the Regency by Mr. Belmont's own American company. Another of Mr. Belmont's companies starts shortly for a tour in the provinces with the musical comedy 'The Dolmenico Doll.' I believe that Mr. Pank and Mr. Belmont are now writing a new melodrama, and as they have both been travelling, but not together, I expect that these telegrams relate to that melodrama. Did you suppose that safe-burglars wire their plans to each other like this?" He waved the telegram with a gesture of fatigue.

Silly, ruined Nina made no answer.

"Do you ever read the papers—the *Telegraph* or the *Mail*, Miss Malpas?"

"N-no, sir."

"You ought to, then you wouldn't be so ignorant and silly. A hotel-clerk can't know too much. And, by the way, what were you doing in Mr. Belmont's room last night, when you found these wonderful telegrams?"

"I went there—I went there—to——"

"Don't cry, please, it won't help you. You must leave here to-day. You've been here three weeks, I think. I'll tell Mr. Smith to pay you your month's wages. You don't know enough for the Majestic, Miss Malpas. Or perhaps you know too much. I'm sorry. I had thought you would suit us. Keep straight, that's all I have to say to you. Go back to Doncaster, or wherever it is you came from. Leave before five o'clock. That will do."

With a godlike air, Mr. Reuben swung round his office-chair and faced his desk. He tried not to perceive that there was a mysterious quality about this case which he had not quite understood. Nina tripped piteously out.

In the whole of London Nina had one acquaintance, and an hour or so later, after drinking some tea, she set forth to visit this acquaintance. The weight of her own foolishness, fatuity, silliness, and ignorance was heavy upon her. And, moreover, she had been told that Mr. Lionel Belmont had already departed back to America, his luggage being marked for the American Transport Line.

She was primly walking, the superlative of the miserable, past the façade of the hotel, when someone sprang out of a cab and spoke to her. And it was Mr. Lionel Belmont.

"Get right into this hansom, Miss Malpas," he said kindly, "and I guess we'll talk it out."

"Talk what out?" she thought.

But she got in.

"Marble Arch, and go up Regent Street, and don't hurry," said Mr. Belmont to the cabman.

"How did he know my name?" she asked herself.

"A hansom's the most private place in London," he said after a pause.

It certainly did seem to her very cosy and private, and her nearness to one of the principal theatrical managers in America was almost startling. Her white frock, with the black velvet decorations, touched his grey suit.

"Now," he said, "I do wish you'd tell me why you were in my parlour last night. Honest."

"What for?" she parried, to gain time.

Should she begin to disclose her identity?

"Because—well, because—oh, look here, my girl, I want to be on very peculiar terms with you. I want to straighten out everything. You'll be sort of struck, but I'll be bound to tell you I'm your father. Now, don't faint or anything."

"Oh, I knew that!" she gasped. "I saw the moles on your wrist when you were registering—mother told me about them. Oh, if I had only known you knew!"

They looked at one another.

"It was only the day before yesterday that I found out I possessed such a thing as a daughter. I had a kind of fancy to go around to the old spot. This notion of me having a daughter struck me considerable, and I concluded to trace her and size her up at once." Nina was bound to smile. "So your poor mother's been dead three years?"

"Yes," said Nina.

"Ah! don't let us talk about that. I feel I can't say just the right thing . . . And so you knew me by those pips." He pulled up his right sleeve. "Was that why you came up to my parlour?"

Nina nodded, and Lionel Belmont sighed with relief.

"Why didn't you tell me at once, my dear, who you were?"

"I didn't dare," she smiled; "I was afraid. I thought you wouldn't——"

"Listen," he said; "I've wanted someone like you for years, years, and years. I've got no one to look after——"

"Then why didn't *you* tell *me* at once who you were?" she questioned with adorable pertness.

"Oh!" he laughed; "how could I—plump like that? When I saw you first, in the bureau, the stricken image of your mother at your age, I was nearly down. But I came up all right, didn't I, my dear? I acted it out well, didn't I?"

* * * * *

The hansom was rolling through Hyde Park, and the sunshiny hour was eleven in June. Nina looked forth on the gay and brilliant scene: rhododendrons, duchesses, horses, dandies—the incomparable wealth and splendour of the capital. She took a long breath, and began to be happy for the rest of her life. She felt that, despite her plain frock, she was in this picture. Her father had told her that his income was rising on a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, and he would thank her to spend it. Her father had told her, when she had confessed the scene with Mr. Reuben and what led to it, that she had grit, and that the mistake was excusable, and that a girl as pretty as she was didn't want to be as fly as Mr. Reuben had said. Her father had told her that he was proud of her, and he had not been so rude as to laugh at her blunder.

She felt that she was about to enter upon the true and only vocation of a dainty little morsel—namely, to spend money earned by other people. She thought less homicidally now of the thirteen chorus-girls of the previous night.

"Say," said her father, "I sail this afternoon for New York, Nina."

"They said you'd gone, at the hotel."

"Only my baggage. The *Minnehaha* clears at five. I guess I want you to come along too. On the voyage we'll get acquainted, and tell each other things."

"Suppose I say I won't?"

She spoke despotically, as a pampered darling should.

"Then I'll wait for the next boat. But it'll be awkward."

"Then I'll come. But I've got no things."

He pushed up the trap-door.

"Driver, Bond Street. And get on to yourself, for goodness sake! Hurry!"

"You told me not to hurry," grumbled the cabby.

"And now I tell you to hustle. See?'

"Shall you want me to call myself Belmont?" Nina asked.

"I chose it because it was a fine ten-horsepower name twenty years ago," said her father; and she murmured that she liked the name very much.

As Lionel Belmont the Magnificent paid the cabman, and Nina walked across the pavement into one of the most famous repositories of expensive frippery in the world, she thrilled with the profoundest pleasure her tiny soul was capable of. Foolish, simple Nina had achieved the *ne plus ultra* of her languorous dreams.

The Best Physick

ALTHOUGH our ordinary air be good by nature or art, yet it is not amiss, as I have said, still to alter it; no better Physick for a melancholy man, than change of air, and variety of places, to travel abroad and see fashions. Leo Afer speaks of many of his countrymen so cured, without all other Physick . . . For peregrination charms our senses with such unspeakable and sweet variety, that some count him unhappy that never travelled, a kind of prisoner, and pity his case, that from his cradle to his old age beholds the same still; still, still the same, the same.

ROBERT BURTON.

Consequences

"The beginnings of all things are small"

By OWEN OLIVER

I TELL my fairy stories to grown-ups because children won't believe them. When you grow older you find that you have only to leave out the fairies to make them all come true. Some of them happen all round us every day. Jack fights the giant still, though he wears khaki instead of red and blue, and we all sow seeds that grow beanstalks reaching the clouds. Some go on growing all the way to Heaven.

We call the beanstalks "consequences," and they grow from the least of human deeds and words. There was once a shoeing-smith who drove a nail carelessly and lost a kingdom. For want of a nail the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe the horse was lost, for want of a horse the leader was lost, for want of a leader the army was lost; and the loss of the army lost a kingdom.

You may say that this was a long time ago—and it was—and you may think that such things do not happen nowadays—but they do. Only a little while ago several countries were saved from destruction by a pin; just an ordinary pin; the sort you buy stuck on paper in rows, several dozen for a farthing.

The pin was lost because a baby laughed. I do not know why the baby laughed. No one ever does. I think myself that babies are sent from Heaven with a stock of laughter to spend on earth, where we need it badly.

Anyhow this little, chubby, blue-eyed, golden-haired, darling baby did laugh. It sat in a baby-carriage on a seaside esplanade on the first fine morning in spring, and grabbed at the flies and the sunshine, and couldn't find them when it looked in its hand. And presently it laughed; and then it kicked with delight at the sound of the laughter; and when it kicked a tiny pin was loosened from its clothes and fell with a tiny tinkle upon the esplanade; and then a trim nursemaid came and wheeled the baby (God bless it!) out of our story and left the pin behind.

It lay where it fell for an hour and more, twinkling in the sun; and then it caught the eye of the Sweetheart of the Youngest Clerk in a House of Business in the Capital of the Country that owned the town that owned the esplanade. She was a kind and pretty Sweetheart, the nearest thing to a fairy in this story; and sometimes the Youngest Clerk thought she really was one! She had not been well, and had grown pale, so the doctor had sent her to the seaside to find some roses to put in her cheeks, and she had found two pink ones.

The pin twinkled at the Sweetheart, and the Sweetheart twinkled at the pin, and was passing by, when she recollected some foolish rhymes that her nurse taught her when she was a child. (I am not sure that they are very rhymey rhymes, but I am sure that they are foolishly foolish.)

See a pin and pick it up,
All the day you'll have good luck.
See a pin and let it lay,
You'll have bad luck all the day!

The Sweetheart thought it was a pity to lose a day's good luck. So she bent down and picked up the pin and stuck it in her blouse. Then she smiled at herself for following an old fable; and she thought, "If Billy Boy were here he'd laugh at me and tease my life out!" Billy Boy was her name for the Youngest Clerk; but other people called him William Henry Gordon Smith.

"I love to set old Billy Boy laughing," she told herself; and then she wondered whether, now she was away, other people could make him laugh very much. She was afraid they couldn't, and especially afraid they wouldn't the next day, because it was Saturday, and Saturday afternoons were holidays, and on holidays they always took each other out when she was at home. So she expected that Billy Boy would miss her.

"I wish," she thought, "I could do something to cheer Billy Boy up to-morrow. He's sure to mope without me."

She made quite a woeful little mouth

thinking of her Billy Boy moping. Then she had a bright idea that made her clap her hands.

"*I* know!" she decided. "I'll write an extra letter for the old silly to get on Saturday morning!"

Some of you will think this was a very little thing, like the pin; but you don't know this Sweetheart, and I do. (I am very, very glad of that.) So I won't deceive you. She was a funny little Sweetheart who hated writing letters, and always lost her notepaper and mislaid her pen and never could find the ink, and forgot the stamp till they had closed the post-office. The Youngest Clerk knew that writing was a dreadful worry to her, and he wanted her to be happy on her holiday, so he said that she need only write twice a week, on Wednesdays and Sundays, and was quite surprised and delighted that she hadn't missed one yet. So, although it would be a little deed for you or me to write a letter, it was a great, big, kind deed for her.

She made sure of sending the letter in time by going straight back to her boarding-house. She sat down in what the proprietors called the boudoir and the boarders the rabbit hutch, and she wrote eleven pages to the Youngest Clerk with a scratchy pen, the kind that is specially made for boarding-houses and post-offices. I should like to say that it was a sensible letter, but this is a true story, not a fairy tale. It was *not* a sensible letter, and it rambled from one thing to another without any full stops. ("Just like she jabbers!" the Youngest Clerk thought when he read it. "Bless the kid!") It began, "Darling old Billy Boy," and it ended "yours so lovingly," and there's no need to tell you another word of it except the postscript:

"P.S.—Don't forget that I come back by the 6.5 on Thursday. Please meet me round the corner, *not* in the station, because I shall want a *big* kiss *at once*."

You will see that this was really important, if you have not missed the fairest thing in life.

The Youngest Clerk's Sweetheart put the stamp criss-cross way (to stand for a kiss), and thumped it tight with her little fist, and then she ran round to a red pillar-box and dropped in the postscript and the rest of the letter; and then she tripped on down the street and out of our story. If you would like to know what happened to her afterwards, she got the big kiss and several more; and she's still in the story of the Youngest Clerk; and he and she think it is a fairy story. God bless her!

¶

THE next morning was Saturday, and the other fine day in spring; and the Youngest Clerk marched into his Office mopping his forehead and looking like a man who has lost a sovereign and found a sixpence. His thoughts ran something like this:

"Beastly fine day! Ugh! Just my luck! If the Kid had been home we'd have gone to the woods. *I* don't know what I'll do this afternoon. Ugh! If I could afford to run down and see her. . . . Well, I can't. Ugh! . . . She *said* she was better; but she was sure to say it. She *won't* take anything for her cough, unless I make her. Obstinate little monkey! . . . If she weren't such a lazy little beggar she'd let me have a line this morning to say how she is; but she won't think how pipped I'll feel without her. If she did, she *would* scratch a line—perhaps! . . . She'll be grinning and laughing and forgetting about me. . . . Bah! What a grumbling ass I am. I *told* her not to worry about writing. I——"

Then the Oldest Clerk greeted him with "Fine morning!" and he grunted and hung up his hat.

"Too fine for me," he growled. "I call it beastly hot. I hate this sort of weather. If only it would rain or snow or something, I'd be glad. I——"

Then the Youngest Clerk saw the letter (with the stamp crossways) lying on his desk and grabbed it. A grin began at the corners of his mouth and spread as he read the letter. (He was thinking things of this sort: "Just like she jabbers!" "Funny little kid!" "She must be feeling better." "*Will* I be glad to see her? Ha, ha, ha!") The grin reached from ear to ear before he finished. When he read the postscript the grin couldn't lengthen, so it widened.

"I never," the Oldest Clerk observed, "saw anything so like a Cheshire Cat! *What* did you say about the weather, young man?"

"I don't remember, Mr. Brown," the Youngest Clerk confessed, still grinning and grinning; "but it's a lovely morning, isn't it?"

His grin overflowed into a laugh.

"Ah!" the Oldest Clerk twitted him

" You're one of those people who judge the weather from the daily report." He pointed to the letter in the Youngest Clerk's hand. " Cupid's gone up, eh ? Tut, tut ! I mean Mercury ! Perhaps it's a spirit thermometer. They make them of spirits ! "

" I don't deny," the Youngest Clerk admitted, " that I've had news to send my spirits up. It's from a friend who's gone away for her health. She seems to be a lot better. I'm glad, because—she's a rather particular friend. In fact "—he hesitated bashfully—" I'm engaged to her."

" The little girl I saw you with at the pictures ? " the Oldest Clerk suggested. " Well, I'm glad she makes it fine weather. We can all do with a bit."

He smiled at his jokes, and because it made him feel cheerful to see the Youngest Clerk looking so happy. He really *did* look happy. I want you to note that because it's the last time he appears in the story. So we'll say " God bless him ! "

The Oldest Clerk had caught an attack of cheerfulness from the Youngest Clerk ; and he had caught it badly. He couldn't get rid of it any more than if he had caught a cold. So he kept smiling and smiling ; and when the Head of the Business sent for him, to talk over some long statements of accounts, he chuckled as he talked.

" It makes you cheerful," he explained, " this fine weather ; and to have young people about you."

The Head of the Business had been feeling very worried a minute before ; but now he caught a germ of cheerfulness from the Oldest Clerk. So he nodded and smiled.

" Yes," he agreed. " It's lovely weather. . . . And we who have happy young people about us have much to be thankful for."

" Ah ! " said the Oldest Clerk. " Three now, isn't it, sir ? Fine weather for children ! " He nodded at the sunshine on the desk, and his chief looked at the motes dancing in it—like children—and smiled again.

The Oldest Clerk went out of the room (and out of the story ; and so we will say " God bless him ! ") ; but the Head of the Business still smiled at the sunshine streaming in through his dusty window. It made him think of another window that sunny faces had looked from when he left home ; that they would be looking from when he returned home again.

" It's fine bright weather for the kids," he said to himself. " I'll take them on the common this afternoon. . . . There are lots of bright spots in this spotty old world if one picks them out. . . . *Funny* little kids ! What queer things they do and say ! "

He thought of the funniness of his children, who were the funniest in the world—one's own always are—and that put lots of amusing things into his mind. So he went out smilingly to try to do some awkward business in a great Department of State, and entered smilingly into the presence of the Dryest Official—which few had ever done. He continued smiling there, which was a thing without precedent and disturbing to the Official Mind !

The Dryest Official was preter-officially dry. His juniors said that he was born a mummy and afterwards dried up. They called him " Gloomy Granet," and they told a story to illustrate his gloomy view of everything. One morning an energetic young clerk, who had heard him speak of insuring his life, kindly took the booklet of an insurance society to him. Thereupon he sternly reproved the youth for breach of good taste.

" A nice thing ! " he protested. " To come and talk about dying to a man who's getting on in years ; and not feeling too well either ! "

" Oh, well, Mr. Granet," the young man tried to console him, " you have capital health as a rule, you know. I should think you have many years of life before you."

" Umph ! " growled the Dryest Official. " Not much comfort in that ! "

He looked as if he had been considering insurance from both points of view, when the Head of the Business arrived, and required several forms to be filled up, and consulted two books of regulations before he would even begin the business ; but the Head of the Business's cheerfulness was more obstinate than the Dryest Official's gloominess—which, indeed, was only an outer shell to a worthy and not unpleasant man—and they gradually came to terms satisfactory to both. As they were concluding their affairs, the Dryest Official actually smiled ; and then he smiled again at himself for smiling at nothing. He smiled again for having smiled at himself, after the Head of the Business had left. (Good-bye to him and God bless him !) It struck him for the first time in his life that there was something funny in his own lack of funniness !

While he was smiling for the third time,

the Under-Secretary of the great Department of State sent for him to give some information about a certain old treaty. He went off with an armful of documents; and while he was expounding with his finger on a finger-worn clause he felt a strange inclination to smile again. He tried to suppress the smile, and wondered whether it was funnier that he should want to smile or want not to. The problem struck him as so comical that suddenly he laughed aloud.

The Under-Secretary's head shot up from the musty document, and he stared in astonishment. "Granet!" he gasped. "You laughed!"

He had known the Dryest Official for thirty years, and had never heard him laugh before. The Dryest Official's face wasn't prepared for it either, and hadn't the proper creases to join in. So it only looked hurt; and this made the Under-Secretary laugh again.

"I always thought you had a queer sense of humour, old man," he remarked. "I suppose this confounded clause thirty-four appeals to it."

The idea of his laughing at an international treaty struck the Dryest Official as so unofficial that he became solemn again; but the Under-Secretary had caught the attack of cheerfulness from him.

"It is ambiguous," the Dryest Official said, as if he accused the clause of bigamy.

"Ambiguous!" the Under-Secretary cried wrathfully. "Can't you find a ruder word for it? I never read such disgraceful drafting. You can make it say two exactly opposite things. We know which we intended, of course; but is there any documentary evidence to prove the intention?"

The Dryest Official shook his head.

"There's not enough to show what we meant ourselves," he stated, "and absolutely nothing to show what Coronia meant; and the context doesn't help either. Does Coronia totally deny our interpretation?"

"Totally," the Under-Secretary informed him. "In fact their last communication even alleges that such a claim shows bad faith. We've said much the same to them. I don't see how either side can withdraw. The ambiguity is more than funny enough to make you laugh. It's funny enough to cause a war. . . . I think it will, Granet."

And then the Dryest Official laughed again.

"It seems so funny," he gasped, "that I should laugh upon such an occasion! I'm not laughing at the treaty. I'm laughing because I laughed! . . . I was thinking that I'm glad we've had a laugh together before the war comes, because we shan't after! Ha, ha!"

The Under-Secretary leaned back in his chair and laughed silently with his great body shaking. (He had caught the germ of laughter, you see.)

"It's the first we've ever had together," he declared. "I'm glad, too! It's bucked me up, Granet. I feel a different man since you laughed. I take it as a good omen. Do you know, I believe a little cheerfulness is what we want to clear the trouble up. I shall tell the Secretary of State so. He's to see the Coronian Ambassador this morning, and he's very despondent over the business. I shall advise him not to ride the high horse, but to start cheerfully and assume that disagreement is out of the question, and that the only point is *how* two friendly and sensible nations are going to smooth out the tangle. After all, every settlement is very much a matter of feeling; and who wants a war on a morning like this—a morning when *you* laugh!"

He laughed once more at that.

"It must have been the fine weather," the Dryest Official apologised. "We are all at the mercy of the weather—and our livers!"

"I wonder," the Under-Secretary meditated, "what kind of a breakfast the Ambassador had! I hope the Policeman was pleasant to his cook last night! . . . Life's a queer game. The treaty won't save a war; but some little bond of human nature might. Thank you, Granet."

The Dryest Official departed from the room, and from our story, with his musty books and documents under his arm. So good-bye to him; and God bless him, too.

The Under-Secretary went and stood at his window looking out into the great square of the Capital, with its fountain and columns and statues of long-departed kings; and the little seed of cheerfulness grew a great tree of hope in him, because he was a great man.

"Some little touch," he muttered, "of our common humanity. The sight of the world rejoicing in the sun!"

He watched the folk passing across the great square, and he noticed that they looked warm and smiling. He noticed the old

apple-woman nodding cheerfully at her stall. He saw the sunbeams sparkle in the eyes of a maid who smiled up at her lover. Who wants war when the world's a-sun? The joy of it had reached the heart of the Dryest Official and made him laugh. Why should it not reach the heart of the Alien Ambassador?

"He's an old rascal as a diplomat," the Under-Secretary muttered; "but he's a decent chap as a man—with the spring sun smiling on him!"

So the Under-Secretary went to advise the Secretary of State, cheered by the laugh of the Dryest Official, who caught his laughter from the good humour of the Head of the Business, who took it from the Oldest Clerk, who was infected by the Youngest Clerk, who was rejoiced by the letter from his Sweetheart, who was set writing by picking up a pin that was dropped through the kicking of a baby who was set kicking by laughter. Why the baby laughed only God knows, who sent it to a world sadly in need of cheering.

¶

THE Secretary of State was a little, white-haired, tired-looking gentleman—too good a gentleman to be a good diplomat the Cabinet was fearing just then. The Under-Secretary, who understood diplomacy better than the Cabinet, had never thought that; but he had believed, before he laughed, that the little gentleman's simplicity of mind and purpose would be an indifferent weapon against the wily Alien Ambassador's shifts and stratagems.

"Well, Sir Norman," the great little gentleman remarked, "I am glad that you came in smiling. I confess that business seems rather unsmiling to me. You look as if you have found a way to take a firm stand on clause thirty-four."

"We can take a firm stand on it," the Under-Secretary answered. "So can they! That's just the danger."

"We have no doubt of the intention," the Secretary of State observed.

"They say they haven't either!" said the Under-Secretary. "So each side charges the other with bad faith——"

"We expressly repudiated such a charge," the Secretary of State cried. "So did they!"

"Umph!" the Under-Secretary grunted. "The usual diplomatic courtesies! We always say it, but, behind the curtains, it *came* to a charge of bad faith, all the same. The dispute isn't over the beastly little island. It's no use to us or to them. It's just a question of *amour propre*. . . . I was wondering how it would answer to assume that they, like ourselves, are quite honest in their contention? The treaty was drafted a long while ago, and intentions are soon lost. I believe they go to a place where they are used for paving. It must be well floored by now!"

The Secretary of State nodded.

"I see!" he said. "I see! Instead of starting from the treaty, which has led to a dead conflict, with both sides indignant, you would start a stage farther forward. The treaty bears both meanings, you would say. Let us begin *de novo*, and argue the case on its merits."

"Yes," said the Under-Secretary. "I think I meant a stage farther even than that from the treaty. I would propose to argue as men who feel this morning's sunshine! It has made even old Granet laugh. I don't believe he has ever laughed before. His very skin seemed to crackle. . . . It's too fine a day to feel like making war. . . . My lord, I believe your personal influence of kindliness is a more important factor in the settlement than the treaty, or argument upon it. It is a day when the world feels that it has a right to be happy and at peace. That's what I mean. It seems a small weight in the scale, but——"

The Secretary of State put his hand on his arm.

"But nothing," he said, "is really small. A balance may turn on a needle point. Such a little thing! Your cheerfulness has infected me, I think. Yes; I shall presume that we begin as friends; no, not presume. There shall be no pretence. I will meet him in full remembrance of the personal friendliness of our dealings, and believing that he, too, may have a touch of personal regard for me. Thank you. You have given me weighty counsel."

The Under-Secretary departed (God bless him with the blessing for a strong man); and the Secretary of State nodded his head and smiled.

The Alien Ambassador smiled also when he entered; but his was not the smile that is caught, through many intervening, from God's laughter brought by a baby. It was the trained diplomatic smile, which is a different variety.

"It is a morning," he began, bowing

courteously and extending his hands, " which discredits the proverbial bad weather of your country. It is very fine."

" It is a morning," the Secretary of State said, " which brightens a world that has not too much happiness. There is a very difficult task in your hands, M. Le Ambassadeur, and mine, to keep the world's weather fine. Shall we approach the question, not from our point of disagreement, but from a point of agreement; that you and I will very honestly and frankly try to combine such powers as God has given us to preserve God's good weather ? "

" But, of course——" the Alien Ambassador began with his diplomatic smile, but then he saw the pale, earnest face of the Secretary of State lit by the sun, and smiling with honest good purpose as he held out his hand; and his own smile altered indefinably.

" So far as any personal effort of mine weighs in the scales," he promised in a tone which had lost finesse and gained manliness. " Yes. It is, as you say, a morning which suggests peace and friendliness. Frankly—*Yes !* We will approach the matter as you suggest, my lord. My personal weight in the decision, of course, is very small."

" The ultimate responsibility," said the Secretary of State, " attaches to the small weights. They turn the scale ! "

He smiled. So did the Ambassador. I think the pleasantness that began from the baby's laughter entered right into him then.

" It would be a pity," he declared, " that you and I should become enemies. We have been friends."

The Secretary of State held out his hand again, and the Ambassador took it again. The handshake was harder.

" It is very, very difficult," the former confessed, " to find a way out. I know that. Let us exercise all our ingenuity to find it. Suppose instead of each attacking the other's interpretation of the treaty, we admit it; suppose we own the clause is absolutely ambiguous; and suppose instead of questioning each other's understanding of the ambiguous intention, we accept that, too, as honest and with some justification, both literally and from the probabilities of each country's former intention being what it now wishes. Let us agree that the treaty fails to settle the matter between us; and try to settle it as two honest, friendly, God-fearing nations ? "

The Alien Ambassador nodded.

" The little weights," he murmured, " that turn the scale."

" My friend," the Secretary of State denied, " they are not little weights: honesty, kindliness, and reverence for God ! "

" I was thinking," the Ambassador explained, " of you and me. . . . and the little weights that move us to friendliness this morning: a ray of sunlight, perhaps, that caught an eye and saved a war ! "

They smiled once more at each other and sat down side by side to find an excuse for peace which would satisfy two countries; and we will leave them so. God bless them, as well as the others who have gone out of our story; and those who were never in it, too. God bless everyone.

That is the best end for any story; but you will want to know what happened afterwards and what the papers said about it. Well, it happened that there was peace instead of war; and the papers said that it was a triumph of diplomacy; and they gave a little of the credit to the Secretary of State and the Alien Ambassador, and the rest to themselves for telling the Government what to do. The Secretary of State and the Alien Ambassador gave themselves very little credit, and the newspapers none. They said it was all due to two old men being warmed by the sun.

That was a better explanation than people got from the newspapers, because it had a bit of truth in it, and the newspapers—as usual—had none; but it was only a scrap of the beanstalk, and *we* have seen it grow from beginning to end. Hundreds of thousands of lives were saved, and millions of happinesses, because a baby kicked for joy of laughter and loosened a Pin, that was picked up by a Sweetheart, who wrote to her Lover, the Youngest Clerk, who was so pleased that he delighted the Oldest Clerk, who cheered the Head of the Business, whose cheerfulness undried the Dryest Official, who rejoiced the Under-Secretary, who carried his joyfulness to the Secretary of State, who shared it with the Alien Ambassador, who helped him make a plan to spread the baby's laugh over two nations and more.

All that we know; but we do not know why the Baby laughed; and we never shall, until we know everything !

Pepys on Pleasure

MAY 1st.—Up betimes. Called up by my tailor, and there first put on a summer suit this year; but it was not my fine one with flowered tabby vest, and coloured camelott tunique, because it was too fine with the gold lace at the bands, that I was afeared to be seen in it; but put on the stuff suit I made the last year, which is now repaired; and so did go to the office in it, and sat all the morning, the day looking as if it were to be fowle. At noon, home to dinner, and there to find my wife extraordinary fine, with her flowered tabby gown that she made two years ago, now laced exceedingly pretty; and indeed was fine all over; and mighty earnest to go, though the day was very lowering; and she would have me put on my fine suit, which I did. And so anon we went alone through the town with our new liveries of serge, and the horses' manes and tails tied with red ribbons, and the standards there gilt with varnish, and all clean, and green reines, that people did mightily look upon us; and, the truth is, I did not see any coach more pretty, though more gay, than ours, all that day.

But we set out, out of humour—I because Betty, whom I expected, was not come to go with us; and my wife that I would sit on the same seat with her, which she likes not, being so fine: and she then expected to meet Sheres, which we did in Pell Mell, and, against my will, I was forced to take him into the coach, but was sullen all day almost, and little complaisant: the day also being unpleasing, though the Park full of coaches, but dusty, and windy, and cold, and now and then a little dribbling rain; and, what made it worst, there were so many hackney-coaches as spoiled the sight of the gentlemen's; and so we had little pleasure. But here was W. Batelier and his sister in a borrowed coach by themselves, and I took them and we to the lodge; and at the door did give them a syllabub, and other things, cost me 12s. and pretty merry. And so back to the coaches, and there till the evening, and then home.

Hazlitt's Viewpoint

"CONTINENTS," says Hobbes, "have most of what they contain"—and in this view it may be contended that the English are the merriest people in the world, since they only show it on high-days and holidays. They are then like a schoolboy let loose from school, or like a dog that has slipped his collar. They are not gay like the French, who are one eternal smile of self-complacency, tortured into affectation, or spun out into languid indifference, nor are they voluptuous and immersed in sensual indolence, like the Italians; but they have a sort of intermittent, fitful, irregular gaiety, which is neither worn out by habit, nor deadened by passion, but is sought with avidity as it takes the mind by surprise, is startled by a sense of oddity or incongruity, indulges its wayward humours or lively impulses, with perfect freedom and lightness of heart, and seizes occasion by the forelock, that it may return to serious business with more cheerfulness, and have something to beguile the hours of thought or sadness. I do not see how there can be high spirits without low ones; and everything has its price according to circumstances. Perhaps we have to pay a heavier tax on pleasure than some others: what skills it, so long as our good spirits and good hearts enable us to bear it?

"The Liberry"

Concerning the truth about a self-made man

By IAN HAY

I FIRST met Mr. Baxter at the fourpenny box outside Mr. Timpenny's second-hand bookshop in High Street, and was attracted at once by the loving care with which he handled its contents. Dirty and dog-eared as most of them were, he never snatched one up or threw it down, after the common fashion of patrons of inexpensive literature, but would gently extract a more than usually disreputable volume from its heap, blow the dust off, straighten the warped cover, and smooth out the wrinkled pages before dipping into the subject-matter. In fact, the last operation struck me as interesting him least of all.

Becoming aware of my presence, he moved aside with a courtly little bow. He was a dusty old gentleman in a very shabby frock-coat. He looked as if he lived in the fourpenny box himself.

"Am I preventing you from selecting a volume, sir?" he enquired.

I hastened to reassure him. I had no special designs on the fourpenny box, or indeed on any. I was merely idling.

"I am waiting for the chemist to make up a prescription," I said.

"Then you don't do your own dispensing, sir?"

"As a rule, yes. I have run out of this particular drug, though. But you know me?"

"Yes, sir; by sight. We do not take long in Broxborough to get to know everyone by sight. You succeeded to Doctor Wiseman's practice, I think?"

"Yes."

"A good old man, sir, and a lover of books, like myself."

"You're right about yourself," I said. "You handle a book as I would a delicate patient."

"A very apt comparison, sir. To me, in a manner of speaking, a book is a human thing. A dilapidated book *is* a patient; I like to repair its broken back and gum in its loose pages. In fact, the late Archdeacon used to rally me upon the subject, sir. He insisted that I cared more for a book, as a book, than for what was inside it."

I ventured, with immediate success, to draw him out upon the subject of the late Archdeacon.

"Archdeacon Belford, sir. He died many years ago, and few remember him now. A great scholar and gentleman. I was associated with him almost continuously in my younger days. It was he who assisted me to found my library."

"Your library?"

"Yes, sir." The old gentleman's mild blue eyes suddenly glowed with pride. "Nothing very pretentious, of course; but I take my little pleasure in it. And it grows—it grows." He picked a small tattered volume out of the box—it looked like an ancient school prize—and turned down a few dogs'-ears with a distressed expression.

"A sweet little edition," he said, examining the text, "but small print. I have left my glasses at home. Would you very kindly indicate to me the nature of its contents, sir?"

I read a few lines aloud to him—poetry.

"I don't know it," I confessed. "Poetry is not much in my line. Let me look at the title-page. Ah—Robert Southey."

"I rather thought it was Southey," said Mr. Baxter immediately.

"I fancy you are more widely read than I am," I remarked.

"I make a point of reading aloud a passage out of one of my books every day, sir. I acquired the habit under the late Archdeacon. We read together constantly. He had very definite views on the value of reading. 'A man with books about him,' he used to say, 'is a man surrounded by friends far more interesting and distinguished than any he is likely to meet when he dines with the Bishop. A man with a library of his own, however small, is at once a capitalist who can never go bankrupt and an aristocrat who moves in circles to which the common

herd cannot penetrate. In other words, a man with a library is a man respected!' That was why I founded my own, sir. The Archdeacon himself contributed the first few volumes."

"Is it a large library?" I asked, glancing furtively at my wrist-watch.

"No, sir; of very modest dimensions. But it is sufficiently large to be utilised by nearly all my friends."

"You lend them books, then?"

"Oh no, sir. I would not do that. My books are everything to me—and you know what book-borrowers are! My friends are welcome to tap my literary resources, but it must be through me as medium."

"I don't quite understand," I said, noting out of the corner of my eye that Mr. Pettigrew, the chemist next door, had emerged from behind the carved wooden screen which masks the mysteries of his dispensing department from the layman's eye, and was now visible through the shop window, busy with white paper and sealing wax.

"When a seeker after knowledge calls upon me," explained the indefatigable Mr. Baxter, "I select from my library the appropriate volume and read, or recite, to him such passages as appear to me most applicable to his case. In this way I ensure the safety and cleanliness of my literary property——"

"So here you are! I thought so. Have you been buying another of those dirty things?"

A small, alert, slightly shrewish girl of about fifteen had suddenly appeared from nowhere, and was now transfixing my flinching companion with the eye of the Ancient Mariner.

"Only fourpence, my dear," replied Mr. Baxter deferentially.

"That's right. Throw money about!" said the young lady. "Have you *got* fourpence?" she added, with a slight softening of manner.

"Well, to be exact, I rather think all I have at the moment is threepence."

The Ancient Mariner produced a penny.

"Here you are," she said, handing him the coin with a not altogether successful attempt at an indulgent smile. "You haven't bought anything for a fortnight. Go in and pay for it, and then come home to dinner, do!"

"Good morning, Mr. Baxter! How's the library this morning?"

The chemist was standing in his doorway, with a facetious twinkle in his eye. Evidently Mr. Baxter's library was an accepted target for local humour.

Mr. Baxter took no notice, but disappeared into the bookshop. Mr. Pettigrew handed me my bottle.

"One of our characters, that old fellow," he said, with that little air of civic pride which marks the country-townsman booming local stock. "Quite a poor man; but possesses an extensive library—*quite* extensive. His learning is at the service of his fellow-citizens. He likes to be called The Oracle. Supposing you want to know something about Shakespeare, or Julius Cæsar, or Wireless Telegraphy, or Patagonia, you go to Baxter. You press the button and he does the rest! Lives a bit in the clouds, of course; and I wouldn't go so far as to say that his information is always infallible. In fact"—Mr. Pettigrew tapped his forehead significantly—"his upper storey——"

"Who made up a wrong prescription, and poisoned a baby?" demanded an acid voice immediately under the humorist's left elbow. He swung round. The small girl, crimson with wrath but with her emotions well under control, stood gazing dispassionately before her, apparently talking to herself.

"Whose wife gave a party," she continued —"and nobody came? Whose daughter wants to marry the curate—and he won't? Who——"

"That'll do," announced Mr. Pettigrew shortly, and retired in disorder into his shop. Simultaneously The Oracle emerged from the bookshop with Robert Southey under his arm, and with a stately inclination in my direction departed down the street, under the grim and defiant escort of his infant guardian.

II

ONE morning about three months later, my butler, footman, valet-de-chambre, chauffeur and general supervisor, McAndrew, thrust his head round the dining-room door as I sat at breakfast and announced:

"There's a wee boady in the hall."

I have known McAndrew for seven years now, and I understand his vernacular. We met in that great rendezvous of all time, the Western Front, on a day when I took

command of a Field Ambulance in which McAndrew was functioning as a stretcher-bearer. When our unit was demobilised in nineteen-nineteen, McAndrew came before me and announced that he had relinquished all intention of resuming his former profession of "jiner" in his native Dumberton and desired henceforth to serve me in the capacity mentioned above for the joint term of our natural lives. I took him on, and he does very well. He has his own ideas about how to wait at table, and his methods with unauthenticated callers are apt to be arbitrary; but he is clean and honest, and—well, he wears a vertical gold stripe on his left sleeve and three ribbons just above his watch-pocket. That is enough for me.

As I say, his vernacular now contains no mysteries for me. So when he made the alarming announcement just mentioned I realised at once that no case of infant mortality had occurred on my premises, but that a person of small stature desired an interview.

"Man or woman?" I asked.

"A lassie."

"A patient?"

"I couldna say: she wouldna tell me," replied McAndrew, not without bitterness.

"Bring her in," I said. Forthwith the Ancient Mariner was ushered into my presence.

"Grampa's in bed with one of his legs again," she announced.

I forbore to ask an obvious and fatuous question, and nodded.

"Doctor Wiseman used to attend him," continued my visitor; "but he didn't charge him very much—next to nothink, almost," she added, with a shade of anxiety.

"Is your grandfather insured, or on any club?" I asked. "If so, the panel doctor would——"

"No, he isn't insured, or anything. He's a gentleman. He has a liberry."

Toujours the Liberry! "Where does he live?" I enquired.

"Twenty-one, The Common. When can you come?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"All right. Don't be earlier than that: I have the room to straighten."

The home of The Oracle proved to be one of a row—something between a villa and a cottage. The door was opened by my sharp-featured little friend.

"Walk in," she said—"and wipe your boots."

Mr. Baxter was in bed in the front parlour. As I had suspected, he had both legs with him—but one of these was inflamed and swollen.

"I always bring him in here when he's poorly," explained the granddaughter (whose name I discovered later to be Ada Weeks), "because he likes to be with his old books." She favoured her patient with an affectionate glare. "He's half silly about them."

I attended to the invalid's immediate wants, and then overhauled him generally. He was not what an insurance agent would have termed "a good life." After that, I was introduced to the library, which occupied the wall opposite to the bed. It consisted of a couple of mahogany bookcases, of solid Victorian workmanship, with locked glass doors lined with faded green silk. Ada Weeks produced a key from under her grandfather's pillow and unlocked one of the doors, revealing the books. They were all neatly covered in brown paper. There were no titles on the backs, but each book bore a number, in sprawling, irregular figures.

"There, sir!" announced my patient with simple pride. "There you behold the accumulated wealth of a man who is just as wealthy as he wishes to be!"

"Rats!" remarked a sharp voice from the recesses of the library; but the old gentleman appeared not to hear.

"It dates from the lamented death of the late Archdeacon. There are a hundred and seventy-nine volumes in all. The little Southey is the last arrival. Show it to us, Ada."

Miss Weeks extracted Volume One Hundred and Seventy-Nine from the lowest shelf, and handed it to the old man. He turned over the pages lovingly.

"Here is the passage which made us acquainted, sir," he said. "A delightful thing." He produced spectacles from somewhere in the bed, adjusted them, and read:

"*My days among the Dead are passed:*
Around me I behold
(Where'er these casual eyes are cast)
The mighty minds of old:
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom—With whom——"

He faltered.

"'*With whom I converse day by day,*'" said Ada Weeks in a matter-of-fact voice. "Don't strain your eyes."

"You are right, my dear," admitted Mr. Baxter, laying down the book. "The type is somewhat small. But this little poem is strangely suggestive of my own condition. It is called *The Scholar*—just about an old man living in the past among his books. I have read it to myself many a time since last I saw you, sir. Put it back, Ada; and show the Doctor an older friend. Something out of the late Archdeacon's library—say Number Fourteen."

Miss Ada pulled down the volume indicated, blew viciously upon the top edges, and handed it to me. It proved to be part of an almost obsolete Encyclopædia.

"A useful little compendium of knowledge," was Mr. Baxter's comment. "Unfortunately, I have not the set complete—only eight volumes. They go as far as *Pocohontas*. There are four more, really."

"*Prairie Oyster* to *Zymotic*," confirmed the ever-ready Miss Weeks.

"Precisely. You would be surprised at the number of my callers who desire information on matters that come between *Prairie Oyster* and *Zymotic!*" The old gentleman sighed. "But where their requirements are limited to the earlier letters of the alphabet, I can usually find a passage which both interests and enlightens them." He glanced at the number on the back of the book. "This is the first volume of the set: *A—Byzantium*. Many a hungry soul have I fed from it." He turned over the pages. "Addison—Algebra—Archæology—Adenoids. That reminds me, a neighbour is coming in to consult me about Adenoids this afternoon. A mother—a woman in quite humble circumstances. I must look up Adenoids."

"Isn't that rather trespassing on my department?" I asked.

"Oh dear no, sir. All I shall do will be to find the passage relating to adenoids, and read it aloud to Mrs. Caddick."

"Mrs. Caddick? I am treating a child of hers for adenoids at present."

"Quite so, sir. And Mrs. Caddick naturally wishes to know what they are. I shall read to her the scientific definition of the ailment. It is surprising what a comfort that will be to her. Poor soul, she's almost illiterate; and the printed word is a sacred mystery to such!"

"You are an authority on human nature, Mr. Baxter, I perceive."

"You are kind to say so, sir. But I was a mere disciple of the late Archdeacon. It's a strange thing, human nature," he continued pensively. "I have studied it all my life. My recreation is to help it—and it needs all the help it can get. I am at home every evening, and folk look in quite regularly to ask for my guidance on some literary, historical, or scientific point of interest. 'Consulting The Oracle,' they are kind enough to call it. Such visits enable me to gratify at once my hobby and my vanity!" He smiled.

"You have one or two bulky-looking volumes up there," I said, approaching the bookcase and inspecting the top shelf. Who is this big fellow—Number Eighty-Seven?"

I half raised my hand; but in a flash Ada Weeks was before me.

"It's Shakespeare," she announced snatching the volume down and holding it to her flat little bosom. "Presentation!"

"Ada is always a little jealous about letting the presentation volumes out of her hands," explained Mr. Baxter, from the bed. "That book was conferred upon me as a small token of esteem by a certain literary circle in London in which I was interested before I came here, many years ago. Bring it to me, my dear."

Ada Weeks, with a sidelong and defiant glance in my direction, handed the great book to the old man. He opened it at random, and began to read aloud:

"*This fortress built by Nature by herself*
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men, this little world;
This precious stone set in a silver sea;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this
England."

He broke off, and smiled.

"You see I do not need glasses," he said, "for such a passage as that! I almost know it by heart, although I never possessed the Archdeacon's astonishing facility in that direction. He was accustomed to commit a passage to memory every day. Put it back, Ada dear."

Miss Weeks restored the volume to the case, closed the door, turned the key, and faced me with the air of a small but determined hen which has safely shut her chickens into the coop in the very face of an ill-disposed but inexperienced young fox. I took up my hat.

"Good-bye, Mr. Baxter," I said. "I shall come and see you to-morrow. Don't let your disciples overtire you."

The old man flushed.

"I thank you for that flattering word, sir," he said.

Half-way down the street I realised that I had forgotten my stethoscope. Accordingly, I retraced my steps.

I found the front door open. I might have walked in without ceremony; but inspired by a very proper fear of Miss Ada Weeks, I tapped respectfully and waited. There was no response. Presently I became aware of voices proceeding from the front parlour—the door of which stood wide open—just inside the passage. This is what I heard:

"*Adenitis*, and *Adenoid Growths*—that's the nearest I can find. Which do you want?"

"I think *Adenoid Growths*, my dear. Read it through once, as usual; then again line by line."

"All right. Pay attention, mind!" said Miss Weeks sharply, and began:

"*Adenoid Growths of the lym—lymphatic tissues of the upper throat occur chiefly in children from four to fourteen.* Yes, that's right: Johnny Caddick is eight. *The child breathes through the mouth.*—Where do they expect him to breathe through? His ear? —*suffers from Nasal Cat*—cat something; we'll call it cater—*from Nasal Cater.* I wonder how people can write such words, let alone read them!"

"To me," said the gentle voice of the old man, "it seems wonderful that they should be able to do either."

"Listen again," commanded Miss Weeks, oblivious of a resounding knock from me.

"—*Nasal Cater, and slight deafness; and is stupid and sluggish*—this book takes off Johnny Caddick to the life, and no mistake! I wonder what his mother will say—*with a cha-rac-ter-is-tic* — oh crumbs! — *facial expression. Cure is effected by a simple operation of removal.* Does that mean his face? A good job if it does! That's all, Now I'll learn you it. *Adenoid Growths*——"

"*Adenoid Growths; Adenoid Growths; Adenoid Growths*——"

"*Of the lymphatic tissues*——"

I recollected that I had a spare stethoscope at home, and tiptoed down the steps.

III

I LEARNED a good deal about the Baxter *menage* during the next few weeks, from various sources.

First the Rector, whom I encountered one day paying a parochial call at Twenty-one, The Common. We walked home together.

"He's a strange old fellow," said my companion, "and most of his characteristics are derived from imitation, conscious or unconscious, of a stranger old fellow still."

"The late lamented?"

"Exactly. Old Belford was a bachelor, and lived alone among his books in his house in the Close for nearly forty years. His only companions were an aged cook-housekeeper and Adam Baxter. He died fifteen or twenty years ago, before I came here. He was nearly ninety, I fancy."

"What was Baxter's exact status in the household?"

"By his own account, he was the old man's confidential secretary, amanuensis, and librarian. My own belief is that he cleaned the Archidiaconal boots. Of course he may have been allowed to dust the books in the library, too. Anyhow, during his period of service in that household he contrived to amass an enormous quantity of more or less useless book-learning. He is regarded hereabouts as quite a savant. His erudition makes him respected by those who have none, and his library of miscellaneous rubbish gives him the status of a man of property."

"It's not all rubbish. He has a Shakespeare and a Southey, at least. He has Jowett's Thucydides, too, he tells me."

"You're right: I retract that part. But his library is rubbish, in the sense that it's an unclassified rag-bag of odds and ends. Still, he's an enlightened old chap in his way. When he settled down in that little house after old Belford's death and began to set up as a sort of provincial Socrates, his conversation and library were mainly classical, as you might expect, considering their origin. He would pull down a Homer, or a Herodotus, or a Virgil, and spout to his audience some favourite passage of his late employer."

"You mean to say he translated from the original Latin and Greek?"

"Ah! That's what nobody knows. The peculiar thing about Baxter is that though he will read or quote from any book in his library for your delectation, he practically never permits anyone to take the book out of his hands. No human eye, for instance, has ever fallen upon the printed pages of Baxter's Homer. If it did, I suspect it would find that page printed in good plain English. Pope's translation, probably."

"You think he is a fraud, then?"

"Oh bless you, no! I think he is a genuine book-lover, and values—in fact lives on—the respect which his literary eminence earns for him in this extremely unliterary township. But candidly I think most of his classical works are common cribs. I have known less pardonable forms of hypocrisy. But I was saying just now he was enlightened. Of late years he has supplemented his Latin and Greek and his poets and historians by scientific and technical literature. People go and consult him about all sorts of modern developments and tendencies now."

"Adenoids, for instance?"

"Precisely. Well, I turn off here. I am going to pay a call upon a gentleman who made a large fortune out of Civilian War Work of National Importance. *He* has acquired a library, too—quite recently and all at once—beautifully bound in morocco and tree calf. But I doubt if he could quote a single line from a single volume therein. Baxter for me, every time! Good afternoon."

Secondly, from McAndrew.

"Yon auld felly, Baxter," he suddenly remarked to me one day while driving me home from a professional round, and passing the door of Number Twenty-one; "he's real respeckit in the toon. In Scotland, of course, he would be naebody, for every one's educatit there. But here there's men making as much as seeven pound a week at the Phœnix Linoleum Works, on the south side, that has read naething since they passed through school but the Sabbath newspapers. They look on Baxter as a kin' o' Cyclopedy. *But*—I was in there the other nicht for a bit crack, and I asked him what he thought of Rabbie Burns. *He'd never heard tell of him!* There's your Oracle!"

"Mr. Baxter is a self-made man of letters," I said. "He got most of his learning second-hand from the Archdeacon. Perhaps the Archdeacon was not a student of Burns, either."

The enormity of this suggestion quite paralysed McAndrew for a while. Presently he recovered sufficiently to resume:

"Yon Archdeacon was a doited sort of body. He lived all alone in yon dreich-lookin' house in the Cathedral Close nigh fufty year. He had naething aboot him but books, and naebody aboot him but an auld wife, Mistress Corby, and Baxter. She's deid now, but her dochter married the ironmonger in High Street. It was her was telling me. Mistress Corby did the beds and the cooking, and Baxter did everything else. He redd up the library, and dusted the books. He carried the coals and sorted the garden as weel. And where do you think the Archdeacon got him?"

"Baxter?"

"Aye. Singin' in the street! There's few fowk in this toon ken that, or mind it. But Baxter just drufted into the place one wet day, with the toes stickin' oot of his boots, and the Archdeacon found him standin' in the rain and took him intil the hoose and kept him. Twenty-five shillin' a week he got, with two suits of clothes a year and a bit present at Christmas. He bided there thirty years, and the Archdeacon never repented of his bargain. Good servants is scarce."

McAndrew paused impressively, to allow this last truth to sink in, and continued:

"I jalouse the way Baxter got on so weel with the Archdeacon was the interest he took in the library. He was never oot of it, unless he was pitten oot. It wasna so much that he would read the books as worship them. He would take them oot and hold them in his hands by the hour, or sit back on a chair and glower at their backs on the shelves. So Mistress Corby's dochter that married the ironmonger tellt me."

"By the way, when did Mr. Baxter's granddaughter appear on the scene?" I enquired.

"That was long after the old man died. He left Baxter an annuity, with two book-cases and a wheen books to start a library of his ain. Mistress Corby's dochter says he left him fufty, and Baxter pinched other twenty-five. That was the nucleus, you'll understand. The rest he has been collecting for himself for many a year."

"And the granddaughter?" I enquired gently.

"Oh, aye; I was coming to her. She came along aboot five years ago, not long after the old man had settled into yon wee hoose where he stays now. She just appeared. Naebody could ever find oot where from, although Mistress Corby's dochter asked Baxter to tea in her own hoose twice and called on him herself three times. Baxter is as close as an oyster, and as for the lassie"—McAndrew shuddered slightly—"she has an ill tongue tae provoke."

Thirdly, *chez* Baxter.

As already indicated, it was the old

gentleman's custom of an evening to receive visitors in the front room and discourse to them on literature, poetry, history, and science. Light refreshments—very light refreshments—were handed round by Miss Weeks; but these were a mere appendage to the literary provender supplied. I formed the habit of joining this symposium upon one evening every week—at first out of idle curiosity (and perhaps with the pardonable desire of indulging in one of the few forms of advertisement open to a struggling physician), but subsequently through sheer interest in the Academy itself and the amazingly sure touch with which the master handled his disciples.

They were a motley crew. There were socially ambitious young shop-assistants, anxious to acquire a literary polish likely to impress the opposite sex. There were artisans who wished to advance themselves in the technique of their profession. There were heavy-handed, heavy-shouldered, rather wistful men, with muscles made lusty by hard physical labour, conscious of minds grown puny and attenuated for lack of intellectual nourishment. There were humble folk with genuine literary leanings, who came to consult Mr. Baxter's poems and essays, and sometimes shyly proffered compositions of their own for perusal and comment. There were men—uneducated men—dimly conscious of the fact that they possessed immortal souls, who had waded into the deep waters of theological speculation, and got out of their depth. For each and all Mr. Baxter had a word of welcome and counsel.

"I am very happy to see you, Mr. Wright. And your friend, Mr. ——? Mr. Dennis. Thank you. We are going to read and discuss a passage from *The Tempest* presently. Shakespeare, you know. Be seated, and my granddaughter will offer you a little refreshment. . . . I have been consulting various authorities on statical electricity for you, Mr. Armitage. I have marked a few passages in my Encyclopædia, Volume Twenty in my library, which seem to me to treat the subject most lucidly. You might also derive some information from the life of Mr. Faraday—Volume Eighteen. My granddaughter will look up the passage for you presently. . . . Ah, Mr. Jobson! How are they down at the factory to-day? You are just in time. We are about to read and discuss a passage from *The Tempest*. Shakespeare, of course. Be seated, pray. . . For me to read, Mr. Penton? Thank you: that indeed will be an intellectual treat. I will peruse your manuscript at leisure, and comment upon it at our next meeting. . . . The Agnostics still bothering you, Mr. Clamworthy? Well, I am no theologian; but for sheer old-fashioned common sense I don't think you can beat Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*. The late Archdeacon used to say that he always came back to Paley in the end. Ada, my dear, that passage I marked in Volume Forty-Seven! Now, friends, *The Tempest!*"

After that the Presentation Shakespeare would be opened, and Mr. Baxter would declaim selected passages. His voice was mellow, and his manner ecclesiastical; plainly his whole deportment was moulded, to the last gesture and inflexion, on one unvarying model. A discussion would follow—a quite naïve and rather pathetic discussion, sometimes. Ultimately Mr. Baxter would sum up, generally with extracts from other Shakespearean passages, which he turned up with great readiness and dexterity, rolling them from off his tongue with obvious relish. Occasionally he would ask Ada for some other volume, and read from that. There were great moments when he would actually call for Homer or Horace and, with apologies for rusty scholarship, offer to our respectful ears a quite coherent rendering of some famous passage.

Finally, at a moment selected by herself, the vigilant Ada Weeks would terminate the proceedings with the curt announcement that her grandfather was tired. The precious volumes were locked in the library again, and we were bidden, without ceremony, to say good-night to our host and not to bang the street door. Both of which commands we obeyed promptly and reverently, and departed homeward.

IV

POSSIBLY it may have occurred to the reader to wonder whether in a community at once so erudite and progressive as Broxborough — it possesses both a Cathedral Close and a Linoleum Factory, you will remember—there can have been no official alternative to Twenty-one, The Common—no Public Library, no Public Lecture Courses, no Municipal Oracle, as it were.

In truth Broxborough once had all these things. Before the war there existed an institution known as Broxborough Pantheon. Here was an excellent library of reference; lectures and classes, too, were constantly in operation throughout the winter months. In its lighter moments the Pantheon lent itself to whist drives. But the entire building had been destroyed by fire in nineteen-fifteen, and had never been rebuilt, for the good and sufficient reason that during those days there were other things to do. After the Armistice money was scarce and rates were high. Moreover, that shrinking sensitive-plant, the British bricklayer, had been instructed by his Union to limit his professional activities to a tale of bricks so tenuous that his labours for the day were completed, without undue strain, by the time that he knocked off for breakfast. The months passed; such constructive energy as the district could compass was devoted to Government housing schemes, and still the Pantheon lay in ruins.

But one day a man from Pittsburg, who had been born in Broxborough nearly forty years previously and had relinquished his domicile and civil status therein by becoming an American citizen at the age of three, returned, rugged, prosperous, and beneficently sentimental, to revisit the haunts of his youth and refresh his somewhat imperfect memories of his birthplace.

Naturally he found the place profoundly changed. The Cathedral organ-bellows were now inflated by a gas-engine, and the nine-seventeen up train did not start until nine-forty-two. And—where the Broxborough Pantheon had once reared its stucco pseudo-Doric *façade* upon the market-square, there was nothing but an untidy hoarding masking a heap of charred debris and labelled, "*Site of proposed new premises of the Broxborough Pantheon.*" The label appeared to have been there for some years.

John Crake of Pittsburg made enquiries, and the truth was revealed. The old Pantheon had ceased to exist for nearly five years, and the new Pantheon, in the present condition of the ratepayers' pockets, seemed unlikely ever to exist at all. So John Crake, having pondered the matter in his large and filial heart, put his hand into his own capacious pocket, and lo! the new Pantheon arose. The plasterers had wreaked their will upon the donor's bank account, and were making sullen way for the plumbers and electricians, about the time when I first encountered Mr. Baxter outside the second-hand bookshop.

And now the building was ready for occupation, and the exact procedure at the opening ceremony was becoming a matter of acute recrimination at the Council meetings. So that genial gossip the Rector informed me, as we encountered one another one afternoon on our professional rounds.

"Things are more or less arranged," he said—"so far as our city fathers are capable of arranging anything. The place is to be called Crake Hall, which I think is right, and Crake himself is coming over from America for the opening, which I call sporting of him. Old Broxey" (the Most Noble the Marquis of Broxborough, the Lord-Lieutenant of our County) "will perform the opening ceremony. That is to say, he will advance up the steps in the presence of the multitude and knock three times upon the closed doors of the Hall. A solemn pause will follow, to work up the excitement. Then the donor, who will be standing inside, wearing a top-hat for the first time in his life——"

"Rector, I have frequently warned you that your ribald tongue will some day lose you your job."

"Never mind that. It's a poor heart that never rejoices, and I am too fat to be serious all the time, anyhow. Well, after the appointed interval of silence, Crake will open a kind of peep-hole in the oaken door, and say: 'Who goes there?' or something of that kind. Broxey, if he is still awake, will reply: 'The Citizens of this Ancient Borough,' or words to that effect. Then the doors will be thrown open—assuming that they *will* open; but you know what our local contractors are—and Crake will be revealed in his top-hat, and will say 'Welcome, stranger!' or 'Walk right in, boys!' or 'Watch your step!' or something like that, and will hand the key of the Institute to Broxey, who will probably lose it."

"I see. And then to lunch at the Town Hall, I suppose?"

"Not so fast. Remember this is a Cathedral city: the Dean and Chapter must be given an opportunity to put their oar in. The Dean will now speak his piece, after which I understand that the Choir, who are to be concealed somewhere behind one of the doors, will create a brief disturbance. After that the town will assert itself against the County and the Close."

"What is their stunt going to be?"

"An Address of Welcome and Grateful Thanks to Crake."

"That seems reasonable. But who is going to compose it?"

"I have already done so, by request. It is not half bad," said the Rector modestly.

"Who is going to read it? The Mayor?"

"The Mayor is an imperfect creature, but he possesses one superlative quality: he harbours no illusions about his own ability to grapple with the letter H. He declines to read the Address. Most of the Corporation are in the same boat—though they don't all admit it."

"Why don't you read it yourself?"

"Trades Union rules forbid. If I read it it would be regarded as the propaganda of the Established Church. The forces of Town and Chapel would combine to fall upon me and crush me. No, we must have a citizen—a citizen of credit and renown, locally known and esteemed." The Rector eyed me furtively. "I suppose *you*, now would——"

"Not on your life!" I replied hastily.

"Why not?"

"Well, for one thing I am a comparative stranger: I haven't been here two years yet. Besides, in opening a literary and intellectual emporium of this kind you want—— I have it! The very man!"

"Who?" asked the Rector eagerly.

I told him.

The Rector halted in the middle of the street and shook me by the hand.

"Ideal!" he said. "I'll fix it with the Council. You go and ask *him*."

V

I REPAIRED to the home of The Oracle that same evening. It was destined to be a memorable visit.

Something unusual in the atmosphere impressed itself on my senses the moment Ada Weeks opened the door to me. Miss Weeks's manner could never at any time be described as genial: at its very best it was suggestive of an indulgent sergeant-major. But this evening Ada resembled a small, lean cat, engaged in a rearguard action with dogs. Her green eyes blazed: one felt that she would like to arch her back and spit.

"Pettigrew and Mould is here," she said. "Hang up your own hat: I can't leave them." And she vanished into the front room.

Messrs. Pettigrew and Mould were a sore trial to Mr. Baxter. They did not consult The Oracle regularly, but when they did they made trouble. Their efforts appeared mainly to be directed towards embarrassing their host by asking frivolous questions, and then humiliating him in the presence of his disciples by the manner in which they received his answers.

The attitude of Mr. Pettigrew, the chemist, was understandable; for he was a mean little man, and jealous. He possessed diplomas and certificates of his own: he was steeped in all the essences of the Pharmacopœia: yet none did him reverence. The townspeople purchased cough mixtures and patent pills from him with no more respect than if they had been sausages or yards of tape. Even when he assumed an air of portentous solemnity and retired behind his carved oak screen with a prescription, most of his customers took it for granted that he filled up the bottle from a water-tap and added colouring matter and a dash of something unpleasant to the taste. Probably they were not far wrong. But wrong or right, it never occurred to any of them to treat Mr. Pettigrew as an Oracle, or Savant, or Philosopher; and Mr. Pettigrew undoubtedly felt very badly about it.

Mr. Mould was our local undertaker—which was unfortunate, for nature had intended him for a low comedian. Under a professionally chastened exterior he concealed the sense of humour and powers of repartee of a small boy of ten. To him Mr. Baxter, with his studied little mannerisms and his pedantic little courtesies, was fair game.

When I entered the parlour these two worthies were heavily engaged in their favourite sport of philosopher-baiting. The philosopher himself, I noticed, was looking very old and very tired. I had not seen him for a week, and I was secretly shocked at his appearance.

"You're not looking well," I said, as I shook hands. "You ought not to be entertaining your friends to-night."

"Indeed," replied my host, with the ghost of a smile, "my friends have been entertaining me. Mr. Mould has been amusing us all. Has he not, Ada?"

"If I was his wife," replied Miss Weeks, with a glare which would have permanently disheartened any comedian less sure of himself than Mr. Mould, "I should die of laughing—at myself!"

This dark saying was accepted by the undertaker as a compliment.

"I certainly venture to claim," he observed complacently, "that we pulled our respected friend's leg pretty neatly to-night." Pettigrew sniggered.

"What was the joke?" I asked, without enthusiasm.

"Well, me and Mr. Pettigrew here," began the undertaker, "knowing Mr. Baxter's fondness for giving information and advice, brought him a little poser last time we came here. We asked him if he could find anything in his library about an ancient Greek party called Cinchona. He said he would look Mr. Cinchona up. This evening he had his little lecture all ready for us. Highly enjoyable, it was. Cinchona, it seems, was one of the less-known figures in Ancient Greek Mythology—wasn't that it, Pettigrew?"

Pettigrew grinned, and clicked. He was an unpleasant-looking creature, with false teeth which did not fit.

"In fact," continued Mould, with immense relish, "poor old Cinchona was such a little-known figure that most people—common uneducated druggists, like Mr. Pettigrew—thought Cinchona—was the name of the bark they make quinine from. Haw, haw, haw!"

The two humorists roared outright this time. Mr. Baxter, with the unruffled courtesy of perfect breeding, smiled again, though I could see he was much put out. Jobson, the heavy-shouldered artisan from the factory, sat gazing at him in a puzzled and rather reproachful manner. One could see that he felt his master *ought* to have known all about cinchona.

"An interesting coincidence," commented the old man gently. "The drug cinchona is of course well known scientifically; but classically, Cinchona the demi-god is hardly known at all. In fact, he is only mentioned once or twice in the whole of ancient literature. I have been dipping into my Homer"—he indicated the familiar volume in his hand—"and I find——"

"May I look for myself?" asked Pettigrew suddenly; and before even Ada could spring to the old man's side he had snatched the book and opened it. Baxter put out his hand anxiously.

"Let me find the passage for you, Mr. Pettigrew," he said. "I do not know whether you are familiar with ancient Greek——"

"No," said Mr. Pettigrew grimly, looking up from the book, "I am not. But I *am* familiar with modern German. This book is printed in German!"

"The marginal comments are in German, of course," said the old man quickly. "The thoroughness of German research is proverbial. Give me back the book, pray!" I noticed he was breathing very shortly.

Ada Weeks settled the question by wrenching the volume out of Pettigrew's hand and locking it into The Library.

"You can go!" she announced. "We only entertain gentlemen here."

Pettigrew took up his hat: Mould rose and did likewise. The rest of the company fidgeted uncomfortably in their seats. It was a particularly unpleasant moment.

"Good night, Mr. Baxter," said Pettigrew moving towards the door, which Miss Weeks was obligingly holding wide open for him. "Sometimes I wonder," he sniggered, turning again, "whether you are quite as ripe a scholar as you would have some of the less educated people in this town believe."

MATIN SONG

PACK, clouds, away! and welcome day!
With night we banish sorrow.
Sweet air, blow soft; mount, lark, aloft
To give my Love good-morrow!
Wings from the wind to please her mind,
Notes from the lark I'll borrow:
Bird, prune thy wing! nightingale, sing!
To give my Love good-morrow!
To give my Love good-morrow
Notes from them all I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, robin red-breast!
Sing, birds, in every furrow!
And from each bill let music shrill
Give my fair Love good-morrow!
Blackbird and thrush in every bush,
Stare, linnet, and cocksparrow,
You pretty elves, among yourselves
Sing my fair Love good-morrow!
To give my Love good-morrow!
Sing, birds, in every furrow!

THOMAS HEYWOOD

"Ripe? He's over-ripe — rotten!" announced Mould confidently.

Mr. Baxter rose suddenly from his arm-chair.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you insult me in my own house. It is your privilege to do so. You are my guests——"

I thought it time to interfere. I crossed the room, gently lowered my old friend into his seat again, and turned to the company. They were all on their feet by this time.

"Now look here," I announced, in what I have always hoped is a breezy voice, "you people really must keep your debates academic. Here you are, all flying straight up in the air over some twopenny-ha'penny point of scholarship, and exciting one of my most valued patients"—I patted Baxter solemnly on the shoulder—"to an attack of insomnia! You mustn't do it, you know—especially just now!"

"What do you mean, just now?" asked Ada quickly. She shot an apprehensive glance at her grandfather's drawn features.

"I mean this. You know the opening of Crake Hall takes place on Saturday?"

Everyone looked up, surprised at the diversion.

"Yes: what of it?" said Pettigrew.

"You know that an Address of Welcome and Grateful Thanks is to be read to Mr. Crake by a representative citizen of the town?"

"Yes," said Pettigrew again; and he said it with an intensity which gave him away badly.

"Well, Mr. Baxter here—our very dear and esteemed friend Mr. Baxter"—I spoke the words deliberately, and felt the old shoulder suddenly stiffen under my hand—"has been unanimously selected by the Council"—I breathed a prayer that the Rector might not have failed me—"to read that Address! That is why I am thoroughly angry with you all for tiring him out with your conundrums. He is not a young man, or a strong man; and I want to have him in first-class trim for his appearance on Saturday. Home to bed, all of you!"

"Outside!" commanded Miss Weeks; and shepherded the entire company into the passage, closing the door behind her.

Baxter and I were left alone. I took my stand on the worn hearthrug, with my back to the fire, lingering over the lighting of my pipe with the uneasy self-consciousness of the Englishman who has just participated in a scene. My old friend's thin hands were extended upon the arms of his chair; his head was sunk upon his breast. I decided to say something cheerful.

"Well," I remarked, "I think the Council's invitation came to you at a very appropriate moment."

Baxter raised his head, and I noticed that he seemed to have grown many years older.

"I fear you have done me an ill service, sir," he said. "Unintentionally, of course!" he hastened to add.

"In what way?"

"I cannot accept the Council's invitation."

"Why not? I'll have you fit and well by Saturday."

"It's not that, sir. I cannot do it."

"Why not?"

"Because—because I happen to be an impostor!"

"Oh, come! You must not take things too much to heart. A man can be a sound scholar without knowing very much about Greek or German."

"It's not that, sir."

"What then?"

"I can neither read not write."

VI

I MIXED a glass of weak whisky and water, and made him drink it. Presently he began to talk—in a low voice, with pauses for breath; but after a while with a flicker of his old graciousness and dignity:

"The late Archdeacon, sir, used to observe that a man should have no secrets from his banker, his lawyer, or his doctor. (He had a great many from all three, but no matter!) I have no banker, and no lawyer; but I have a doctor—a very kind doctor—and I am going to tell him something which it is only fair he should know.

"I was born before the days of Free Education: I was earning my living in the streets of London when Mr. Forster brought in the Bill of Eighteen-Seventy. My circumstances were extremely humble. I passed the first years of my life on a canal barge. (My uncle steered the barge. I think he was my uncle.) It is difficult to educate children so reared. They have no permanent place of abode; no particular school-district is responsible for such little vagrants. So I grew up illiterate. My uncle died. I earned my living as best I could. I was strong and active; I engaged in tasks which demanded no knowledge of

letters. I learned to cipher a little in my head and to read the ordinary numerals; but the alphabet remained a mystery to me."

"Why did you not learn to read and write?"

"I did try. At the age of twenty I determined to master my ignorance. I purchased a primer, and endeavoured to teach myself. But that task was hopeless. I entered a night-school—and they asked me what I wished to study. Languages—Mathematics—Science—Engineering? How could I, a great grown man, tell them that I wanted to learn to read and write? I hurried out of the building.

"Then I married. I married a woman as unlettered as myself. Whom else could I ask? We were happy together, in our humble way. But we had few associates, and such as we had possessed all our ignorance and none of our aspirations."

"Had you children?"

"One daughter—Ada's mother. You may depend upon it we sent *her* to school! And she learnt quickly—far too quickly for me. I had cherished a hope that my child and I might commence our education together. But how could the muscle-bound intellect of an illiterate of thirty keep pace with the nimble wits of a sharp little girl?"

The nimble wits of a sharp little girl! Somehow I seemed to recognise that portrait.

"My daughter had passed the goal almost before her father had started. Once more, discouraged and baffled, I relinquished my ambitions: I was a foolish fellow to have entertained them at all. But my child was good to me—very good. Although she possessed neither the art nor the patience to teach me my letters, she discovered in me my one talent—quite a phenomenal aptitude for memorisation. Compensation, probably. If I heard an ordinary newspaper article read over once or twice I could repeat it, word for word, without prompting. And so to satisfy my hungry soul I would beg my little daughter to read aloud to me her school tasks, or her evening lessons—elementary history, geography, and the like. I never forgot them; they were the first real learning I ever possessed. I can repeat them still—and I think they kept me sane.

"My daughter grew up; married; had a daughter of her own; died; and I was alone again. Suddenly I realised that I had passed middle age. I was no longer able-bodied; and I began to realise that when the body begins to fail it is the brain that must carry on. And I had no brain—nothing but a few instincts and rules of life. They were wholesome instincts and healthy rules of life; but as a means of livelihood they were valueless. I began to slip down. I supported myself by odd and menial tasks: I cleaned knives and boots: I sold newspapers which I could not read: I spent long hours as a night watchman, occupying my mind by repeating to myself passages from my little girl's school-books.

"Then came a hard winter: work was scarce enough for skilled labourers, let alone unskilled. As for the illiterate, there was no market for them at all. I tramped from London to try my fortune elsewhere; and came to Broxborough. I was destitute: I sang in the streets for bread—songs I had learnt by listening in public-houses or at popular entertainments in my younger days. And there the late Archdeacon found me. I was a stranger, and he took me in." He was silent again.

"He was very good to you?" I said presently.

"He was an angel from heaven, sir!"

"But didn't he teach you to read?"

The old man looked up at me piteously.

"Sir, I never confessed to him that I could not! And he never found me out! Why should he? I was his servant, engaged on purely domestic duties. Such clerical work as dealing with tradesmen involved was attended to by the housekeeper. One day my master asked me if I had read the Prime Minister's speech, and I replied that I never read the newspapers. I intended the statement to be a confession, leading up to a fuller confession; but instead, the good old man took me to mean that I despised politics and journalism and was interested only in philosophy and literature. From that day he admitted me to all the privileges of his literary companionship. His favourite hobby was reading aloud—preferably passages from the Classics—and he had few to read to. None, in fact. I was appointed his audience. Every evening we sat together and he read aloud to me, with every kind of illuminating comment. My peculiar faculty for memorisation, intensified by the absence of any other medium of self-cultivation, enabled me to commit to memory the greater part of what he read and said. At the end of ten years I could quote long passages from most of the standard works of literature. When

the dear old man died I was a human fountain of quotations—poetical, historical, philosophical. Just that, and nothing more. Once more I had to make a niche for myself in the world. My accumulated lore was my sole asset. So I took this little house, and set up my useless — because mainly ornamental—little library, and endeavoured to win the respect of my new neighbours by dispensing an erudition which was in reality second-hand. Second-hand, sir!" He looked up wistfully. "Am I an impostor?"

"All learning is second-hand," I said. "You are not an impostor."

He rose to his feet, and took my hand.

"You have lifted a load from my mind," he said. "Confession is good for the soul. But you will understand now why I cannot deliver that Address."

"Why not?" I repeated. "I will get a copy of it for you, and you can learn it by heart."

"You can do that?"

"Certainly."

The colour came back to his face.

"The time is short," he said eagerly—"very short; and my memory is not what it was; but I will try. Ada shall read it to me, and read it to me, and read it to me, until I am word-perfect! I *will* succeed! It will be wonderful!"

"It will score off Mould and Pettigrew, too," I added spitefully.

But obviously Mr. Baxter was not thinking of Mould or Pettigrew. He was up again in his rightful place, in the clouds.

"It will be my Apotheosis!" he declared; and brought down his feeble hand with a gentle thump upon the table beside him.

"That's right!" said Miss Weeks, entering. "Break all the cups!"

VII

AT the Municipal luncheon which followed the inauguration of Crake Hall one chair was vacant; the Mayor, in his opening remarks, referring sympathetically to the fact. Mr. Baxter, to whom had fallen the honour of reading the Address of Welcome to their distinguished guest that morning, had found the strain of the proceedings rather too great for his advanced years, and had reluctantly begged to be excused from participating further in the ceremonies of the day. In short, Mr. Baxter had gone home to bed. Later in the proceedings, the Lord-Lieutenant also alluded to the matter. His Lordship was a statesman of somewhat limited ideas, and it is just possible that he was grateful to have had a topic suggested to him. So he spoke quite feelingly of the chair—the chair which was to have been occupied by "our eminent fellow-citizen Mr. Buxton." It was a cheering and reassuring sign, he continued, of our national and civic solidity of character and sense of proportion that Broxborough, where to the unseeing eye of the outside world nothing seemed to matter save linoleum, should yet be able amid its manifold industrial activities to produce a man—a man in quite humble circumstances—to whom Linoleum was nothing and Letters everything. Napoleon had called us a nation of shopkeepers; but so long as a commercial community like Broxborough could go on breeding homespun scholars like Mr. Dexter, we as a nation could continue to give the lie to Napoleon. (Loud and prolonged applause.)

Meanwhile the recipient of these testimonials lay a-dying in his own front parlour. Ada Weeks had put him straight to bed there on his return, utterly exhausted, from the Inauguration. All his frail physical powers had been concentrated for three days on making himself word-perfect in the Address—which he had delivered, by the way, flawlessly. Now reaction had come. An hour later, more nearly frightened than I had ever seen her, Ada fetched me.

My patient had just asked me, faintly but fearlessly, one of the last questions that mortal man can ask; and I had given him his answer.

"I am quite ready," he replied calmly. "I am only seventy-four; but it is well that a man should go at the zenith of his career."

"Are there any arrangements you would like to make?" I asked. "Anything you would like to say?"

"Yes. Is Ada there?"

"Of course I am there!" The small, stricken figure crouching on the other side of the bed put out a skinny paw and took the old man's hand. She held it steadfastly for the rest of the time he lived.

"Would you like to see the Rector?" I asked.

"No, no. I am at peace with God. It is of my little granddaughter that I would speak." His voice was stronger now.

"My annuity dies with me. I have some small savings, which she will receive. But they will not keep her. I shall be grateful if you will exert your influence, sir, in enabling her to go into service."

"There is a vacancy in my house, if Ada will come," I said.

"Thank you. Will you go to the Doctor, Ada?"

Ada, with tears running freely at last, nodded in answer; and the dying man proceeded to the business which was ever uppermost in his thoughts.

"Then, sir, my Library."

"Yes. What are you going to do with it? Leave it to the town?"

"No, no, no, no!" He was strangely emphatic.

"What then?" I asked. I had an uneasy feeling that the Library was going to be bequeathed to me, and I did not want it in the least. But my fears were relieved at once.

"I intend to leave it to Ada—temporarily."

"Temporarily?"

"Yes. But as she will be an inmate of your household, she will probably desire to take you into her confidence, and possibly avail herself of your assistance." His voice failed again: his grip on life was relaxing rapidly. Then he recovered himself, and almost sat up. "Will you promise me, sir, to assist Ada to carry out my wishes with regard to the disposal——"

"I promise," I said. "Don't exhaust yourself."

The old man sank back, with a long and gentle sigh.

"Then I die contented, and reassured. Re——" His voice died away again. Then he rallied, for a final effort:

"I have lived respected, I think!"

That was all.

I looked across to Ada, and nodded. Characteristically, she rose from her knees, crossed to the window, and drew down the blind.

VIII

NEXT morning Ada Weeks and I sat facing one another in my study, across a newly opened packing-case. It contained Mr. Baxter's Library.

"But why must we?" I asked.

"We needn't worry why. He said every blessed book was to be destroyed, and that's all there is about it. Mr. McAndrew is burning rubbish outside; I've told him we've got some more for him. Let's get it over, and go back to Grampa—sir," concluded Ada suddenly, remembering somewhat tardily that she was addressing her employer.

We unpacked the books. First came some musty theological tomes.

"He knew a lot out of them," remarked Ada. "Used to fire it off at the Rector, and people who didn't believe in religion, or couldn't. He picked it all up from his old Archdeacon, though, long before I came to him."

"When did you come, by the way?"

"Nearly six years ago now. I was living with an aunt. She went and died when I was nine, and Grampa sent for me here. It was me that learned him all his new stuff—science, and machinery, and aeroplanes, and things like that. He didn't know nothink but Latin and Greek and history and algebra up till then. Here's the Cyclopædia coming out now. He never used it till I come. He never even knew it was four volumes short until I told him. . . . This next lot is mostly little books he picked up cheap at second-hand places—mouldy little things, most of 'em. Some of them were useful, though. Here's one—*The Amateur Architect*. It's queer how fussy people can be about house-planning, and ventilation, and drainage, and things like that, especially when they know they've got to live all their lives in a house where they have no more say in the ventilation and drainage than my aunt's cat! Grampa had to learn nearly the whole of this book, they wanted so many different bits of it. Well, I think we have fuel enough now for a start."

We staggered into the garden, with arms full, to where McAndrew's bonfire was burning fiercely. McAndrew himself, having regard to his chronic interest in other people's business, I had dispatched upon an errand. Soon the Encyclopædia and the theological works were engulfed in flame. Some odd volumes followed. I cremated my old friend Robert Southey with my own hands. This done, we returned to the packing-case and delved again.

"Did Mr. Baxter wish everything to be burned?" I asked. "What about the presentation volumes—the Shakespeare, for instance?"

"They was *all* to be burned," announced

Ada doggedly, lowering her head into the case and avoiding my glance.

"Very well," I said.

Suddenly Ada looked up again, fiercely.

"Cross your heart and wish you may die if you look inside one of them!" she commanded.

I meekly took the grisly oath. But chance was too strong for us. Ada, eager to keep me entirely aloof from the mystery, attempted to lift four large volumes out of the case at once. The top volume—the Presentation Shakespeare itself—slipped off the others, fell upon the floor, and lay upon its back wide open. I could not help observing that it was a London Telephone Directory.

For a moment Ada and I regarded one another steadily. She did not wink an eyelash. Indeed, it was I who felt guilty.

"I may as well see them all now," I said.

"Please yourself," said Ada coldly.

It was a strange collection. There were three Telephone Directories in all—all old friends of mine, and peculiarly adapted, from their size and dignity, for presentation purposes. (I think they were Shakespeare, Milton, and Dante. The presentation Tennyson, however, proved to be a Bulb Catalogue.) There was a Hall and Knight's Algebra, from which, in my presence, the old man had frequently and most movingly quoted Keats. Homer, as Pettigrew had correctly indicated, was an elementary German grammar. *Plato's Apology* was Mr. Chardenal's First French Course.

"He used to get them cheaper than the real ones," explained Ada. "Besides, what did it matter to him, anyhow?" What, indeed? Poor old boy!

I worked through the whole collection—the miscellaneous flotsam of second-hand bookshops and jumble sales—old novels sold in bundles; old directories sold as waste paper. Every book was neatly covered, and decorated with a sprawling number—the sight of which, although it advertised nothing to the outside world but the position of a book on a shelf, had never failed, for more than twenty years, to switch on the right record in that amazing repertoire.

Idly, I picked out the last book in the box. It was a stumpy little volume, bearing the number Twenty-Five.

"That's 'Orace," said Ada promptly. "It's a real one—in Latin; only it has the English on the opposite page. We used that a lot."

I turned over the time-soiled leaves, and my eye encountered a familiar passage. I looked up.

"I think he would have liked to have a small inscription on the coffin," I said. "We can arrange it when we go back to the house. There's a line here that seems to me would describe him very accurately."

"Read it," said Ada. I did so:

"*Of upright life, and stainless purity.*"

"Yes; he was all that," said Ada thoughtfully. "Never done nothink on nobody; and always the gentleman. It will look nice on the plate. How does it go in Latin?"

I read aloud the ancient tag:

"*Integer vitæ, scelerisque purus.*"

Ada nodded her head vigorously in approval.

"Put it in Latin," she said. "He'd have liked it that way. Besides, it'll learn Mould and Pettigrew, and that lot!"

¶ Among the contributions to CASSELL'S MAGAZINE for May is an interesting article entitled "Tut-ankh-Amen: His Hounds and Hunting," by Howard Carter, D.Sc., whose new book dealing with the subject of recent excavations in Egypt has just been published.

¶ The fiction in the May number of CASSELL'S MAGAZINE includes Douglas Newton's latest long complete novel—"THE JASMINE SHRINE"—and also the latest work of Robert W. Chambers, Max Pemberton, Frank H. Shaw, Albert Richard Wetjen, etc., etc. A new series of amusing stories by Norman Venner begins in the same number, the price of which is One Shilling.

Laugh at Leisure

ONE of the curiosities some time since shown at a public exhibition, professed to be a skull of Oliver Cromwell. A gentleman present observed that it could not be Cromwell's, as he had a very large head, and this was a small skull. "Oh, I know all that," said the exhibitor, undisturbed, "but you see, this was his skull *when he was a boy*."

AN Irishman, who had jumped into the water to save a man from drowning, on receiving a sixpence from the rescued man, looked first at the sixpence and then at the man, saying: "Be jabbers, I am overpaid for that job."

TWO friends, a weaver and a tailor, became in time enemies, so much so that the tailor spoke much evil of the weaver behind his back, though the weaver always spoke well of the tailor. Upon a lady asking the weaver why he always spoke so well of the tailor, who spoke so ill of him, he replied: "Madam, we are both liars."

SAID vain Andrew Scalp, "my initials, I guess,
Are known, so I sign all my poems, A.S."
Said Jerrold, "I own you're a reticent youth
For that's telling only two-thirds of the truth."

A MAN having been capitally convicted at the Old Bailey, was, as usual, asked what he had to say why judgment of death should not pass against him? "Say!" replied he, "why I think the joke has been carried far enough already, and the less that is said about it the better: if you please, my Lord, we'll drop the subject."

A PERSON who dined in company with Dr. Johnson endeavoured to make his court to him by laughing immoderately at everything he said. The doctor bore it for some time with philosophical indifference; but the impertinent Ha! ha! ha! becoming intolerable "Pray, sir," said the doctor, "What is the matter? I hope I have not said anything that *you* can comprehend?"

AN Irishman who had blistered his fingers by endeavouring to draw on a pair of boots, exclaimed: "I shall never get them on at all until I wear them a day or two."

IT was with as much delicacy as satire that Porson returned with the manuscript of a friend, the answer, "That it would be read when Homer and Virgil were forgotten, *but not till then*."

WHILE Butler, needy wretch, was yet alive
No generous patron would a dinner give.
See him, when starved to death and turned to dust
Presented with a monumental bust.
The poet's fate is here in emblem shown.
He asked for bread, and he received a stone.

SIDNEY SMITH, after Macaulay's return from the East, remarked to a friend who had been speaking of the distinguished conversationalist: "Yes, he is certainly more agreeable since his return from India. His enemies might perhaps have said before (though I never did so) that he talked rather too much; but now he has occasional flashes of silence that make his conversation perfectly delightful!"

PAT made a bet with Mike that he could carry a hod full of bricks up three ladders to the top of the building, with Mike sitting on the hod. The ladders were on the outside of the building.

On the third step Pat made a misstep, but caught himself in time to save Mike falling forty feet to the stone side-walk. Arriving at the top Pat said: "Begorra, I've won the bet."

"Yes," replied Mike, "but when ye shlipped I thought I had ye."

The Angel of The Darker Brink

Of a woman whom people easily forgot

By PHYLLIS BOTTOME

NELLY MAGNET had an enormous capacity for loving; and it had never been used.

The overflow of it had reached starved kittens, distant preachers, and unresponsive official superiors. Its central stream was concentrated upon a most cantankerous old mother.

Nelly fondly worshipped this acidulated and self-righteous old lady. She would have liked to wait on Mrs. Magnet hand and foot for ever and to turn her youth into a footstool for her. But neither of them could afford this luxury. Mrs. Magnet had "just enough" without supporting Nelly; so Nelly went into a hospital and supported herself.

It was a glorious existence for Nelly, full of all the opportunities which she most craved.

For twenty years she had developed a passionate longing for making other people comfortable at her own expense.

The secret satisfactions of her heart had been when she succeeded in getting other people into arm-chairs, without their knowing she was doing it, and with nothing left for herself but something small and spiky in a corner.

Half of Nelly's pleasure would have gone if she had ever been discovered, and all of it, if she had ever had to be made comfortable herself.

Fortunately this never happened.

People did not notice Nelly; they merely accepted things from her.

If there were ten persons in a room and Nelly was one of them, the nine would be remembered and Nelly overlooked. This wasn't because Nelly was very plain. She was merely wholly inconspicuous; and without claims.

In appearance, she was neither tall nor short, fat nor lean; her brown hair had no noticeable quality, her nose was unexacting as a feature and a little flat. She had a large, sensitive mouth, with none of those delicate curves which are so often inaccurately ascribed to sensitiveness. What colour she had confined itself to the tips of her ears and nose.

She had eaten bad and insufficient food all her life, and she suffered from chronic indigestion.

Her eyes were soft and brown, not very large and never at all bright. Only her hands were beautiful. They were made for swift and perfect service, supple and fine, sensitive and strong, never too hot or too cold—all her brains were at the ends of those unfumbling fingers.

Nelly had to wait three years before any of the big London hospitals would train her. But she learned all that time. Nursing homes took her; ran her off her feet and drilled her into an astonishing knowledge of how to get things clean, or how, if you were clever enough and lazy enough, to get off without doing so.

She learned how patients died, how scientific people made unscientific mistakes, and pretended that the result of them was an accident. She learned how patients lived very often in spite of these mistakes, because Nature is tough and not easily disheartened.

The people she associated with were hard-working, genial materialists; they didn't take anything too seriously, except their times off. Not their profession, nor their futures, nor the helpless human beings left in their efficient, careless hands.

Their consciences were easy and indurated.

They saw too much of the visible to be very much interested in where anything else began; unless it had something to do with table-rapping. They wanted to flirt, marry, and get what they could out of life.

Some of the nurses, on the other hand, were very religious and faddy about churches. They didn't flirt so much, but they were often more spiteful than the lighter types.

Nelly Magnet was a Roman Catholic; she wasn't at all faddy about churches. She obeyed and worshipped wherever and whenever she could.

Her love of God was behind everything she thought about; but it never interfered with her thoughts; nor did it interfere with her love of God that, on the whole, the majority of her prayers were said to the Virgin.

Every ward in which she nursed rang the changes on magnets and needles without reprieve. The really funny part of the joke was, of course, that she couldn't attract any one at all—not even an outpatient or a dresser.

Then Nelly took her three years at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and at the end of them she won the gold medal.

This was a surprise to everybody, because, although Nurse Magnet had never been in a row, she had never been one of the smart show nurses to whom gold medals naturally fall.

No one had been jealous of her, nor had she ever received a crumb of professional praise.

No great consultant had ever picked her out for notice, no house-surgeon had paid her welcome or unwelcome attentions. No medical student had ever met her eyes, except when they were looking for something which had nothing whatever to do with eyes.

It appeared afterwards that a visiting surgeon had once drawn a momentary attention to her; he had asked the Sister with whom he was discussing a risky operation to let him have in the theatre "that little what-you-may-call-'em with the neat hands."

The names of all the other nurses he knew.

Nelly Magnet got the gold medal simply as a result of the examination, and because when the authorities came to look at it they found her whole record faultless. She was a lucky girl, because there was practically no difference between her profession and her religion.

The matron in their farewell interview looked at Nelly a little dubiously. She had never spoken to her privately since she had accepted her for training.

"Of course, you know you have done very well here," she said stiffly, and, with a visible reluctance, "but we are afraid we can't offer you a ward. You see, you are a first-rate nurse, but you lack authority and initiative. However, you are young; perhaps you may develop these qualities, and I shall in any case give you a most excellent certificate which is certain to get you a good post. If I were you, I should try to be—well—I don't know how to put it quite, but—a little more aggressive. People in this world don't get things unless they think they ought to have them."

Nelly flushed and thanked her. She did not expect the matron to shake hands with her; so, after looking at her hard for a moment, the matron decided that it was not necessary.

¶

NELLY didn't expect a husband, or children, or to get her own way. She never thought she could earn more than her daily bread, or that she would ever succeed in really pleasing her mother; and the matron was perfectly right. Nelly didn't obtain any of these things. Plainer women have got husbands, the unmaternal produce children, and the unfilial retain the adoring love of parents; but none of these blessings befell Nelly Magnet.

She merely succeeded in getting a good post at Woolwich in a military hospital.

When the war broke out she had a right to petition to be sent to the front, which was where she wished to go; but everybody else clamoured past her trampling on her rights.

She very nearly got pushed into an understaffed civilian hospital and left there for the "duration," but at the last moment one of the surgeons said, "I must have a decent nurse for the Service Hospital in London, the new one I'm to take charge of for officers—give me that little what-you-may-call-it—she's got a wonderful surgical hand."

So her hands saved her again, and she went to a large clean palace in the West End, filled from floor to ceiling with badly damaged boys.

It was very different from a big ward of thirty or forty rough Tommies.

Sister Magnet had the room to herself, a wonderful, great, light room which had formerly been a ball-room—a couple of V.A.D.'s under her, and a night sister.

She had only six cases and could spare them her full attention.

It was wonderful to pour into twelve hours her enormous concentration, to do

so much for so few, instead of so little for so many.

The matron came in twice a day, but she never stayed long in Sister Magnet's ward. There was no need.

Nelly had always had an insatiable love for cleanliness. No portion of her person or her very plain clothes failed in attaining the essence of that primal virtue. She had never had to acquire a taste for it—merely to apply a passion; and now that she had a ward of her own, she applied it.

Her V.A.D.'s, two harried and well-meaning ladies, into whom accuracy and obedience were being shocked and pricked day by day, responded better to Nelly's unyielding gentleness than to the hectic authority of the other sisters.

Nelly was trained and they were not, but she neither sneered nor goaded. She showed them again and again with unvarying, unsharpened patience the beauty of the right handling of inanimate things.

She let them do showy bits, when they could, and when they couldn't, she let them down very easily.

If they were nervous she reassured them, and if they were presumptuous, she let them see, and then removed, the danger of their presumptions.

"The only thing that matters," she used to say quietly, but very firmly, "is the patients' comfort."

The patients knew this instinctively. They chaffed and flirted, they told broad stories, and joked with all the nurses who liked it (and most of them liked it), but, though at first they treated Sister Magnet to the same loose side of their courage, or their exhaustion, one by one they dropped it.

They stopped new men from beginning it with her.

Not that anything they said ever shocked her. She ignored their doubtful chaff with a deep motherliness. "Now, then, turn," or "I'll have the left foot, please," but it didn't somehow suit her. And men are quick to know what suits the women who look after them.

She was the one they told their symptoms to, and their fears.

The shyest of them (and some of them were very shy and quite unused to being handled by women) didn't care what she did for them, nor mind at what disadvantage she so quietly met them at their need.

Sister Magnet was shy too; use had never hardened her to the care of men, but their pain drew out of her an endless reassurance.

Other sisters cared for their cases and often gave them a selfless and absorbed attention; but to Sister Magnet they weren't cases: they were her spiritual children. The men knew the difference, and leaned on it.

When they failed as cases, and the interest of other nurses lapsed (or their fears, perhaps, caused their attention to falter before the hopelessness of dying human beings) Nelly stepped in and took them over.

It isn't any use being clever with death, but Nelly did not mind being transcended. She loved best what had gone beyond her powers.

She waited by the dying, and with them through the last slow hours. When the House Surgeon had said, "Unconscious, of course—sinking fast," it was her signal.

Deep in her quiet heart she never believed in the extinction of consciousness before the extinction of life.

It seemed to her that the laboured difficult breath, the final struggle of relinquishment, needed her just as much as any triumphant return. She took life to the dying, held life over them to the last. Her eyes, soft and filled with eagerness, gazed deep into their fading eyes.

She never said anything about religion to them, she couldn't have said anything; but she held God out to them in her heart.

The life that stood by them wasn't only human, it reached out to them, and encircled them, up those steep and final steps—it fumbled with them at the door, and then as the door swung open, it stood humbly back, content to watch them pass into the Ultimate Safety.

II

"THEY'VE telephoned through," the matron said to Nelly one morning, "six new stretcher cases this afternoon; there's a complicated fractured femur I shall hand over to you; he's certain to be pretty bad, especially if he's had to lie out. You had better prepare him for the theatre the moment he gets in."

It was four o'clock on a dull March day when the ambulance stopped at the door.

Sister Magnet was used to bad cases, but this boy they brought in to her was one of the most desperate she had ever seen.

He had been lying out forty-eight hours before the stretcher-bearers found him, and he was tortured with gas—his yellow-brown face was hardly human—his piteous eyes fixed themselves on her like a dog that has been run over. She patted him gently on the shoulder. "There, there, my boy," she said in her soft motherly voice, "there, there!" The boy tried to smile; he was an unconquerably brave boy, or he wouldn't have gone on fighting the pain which had swallowed him up, but he couldn't get through his smile.

His breath came in short, moaning gasps. Sister Magnet wasted no time in getting him ready; she saw there was not much time to waste.

He had been bundled across the Channel after a cursory dressing, during the great Retreat when there was no time to attend to the severest cases.

They got him under chloroform as quickly as they could. Sister Magnet held his hand till he was off; the last thing he knew was the firm, reassuring pressure of her fingers, before a blackness which was bliss rushed down on him, and drove his tortured consciousness away.

The best surgeon in London spent two hours' marvellous work over his shattered thigh, knitting it together with silver, sorting and manipulating his tissues as if he was playing with a picture-puzzle, and bringing it all to a masterly result.

"Of course, he probably won't live through it," he said regretfully as he gave his last artistic touches; "Sepsis'll see to that—too big a wound."

Sister Magnet, respectfully handing him a towel, differed sharply from him in her heart. Something stronger even than sepsis was going to see to that boy.

The first thing that Duncan McAllister felt when he came round miraculously to cleanliness and light—almost to ease—was the same gentle hand across his wrist, the same kind, wise eyes fixed on his, so that he knew that everything was going to be all right before her lips had framed the staggering announcement.

The pain, severe and awful, was quite bearable now because he could locate it: he was no longer drowned in it.

Pain was a part of him, he wasn't any more simply an offshoot of pain; and she would keep him in that superb security.

She told him instantly that she would.

"You'll be all right now," she said; "by-and-by I'm going to give you some morphia, but I'd like you to wait for it a little if you can—it'll be better for you afterwards."

Duncan McAllister said he could wait quite well if she wouldn't go away.

He felt that his only security lay in that white immaculate figure, whose touch was ease, and in whose eyes lay an enormous reservoir of power.

Sister Magnet knew that this smiling boy was different from any of her other patients (he could get through his smile now, and it was a singularly sweet one); it wasn't only that he was braver: he was more definitely hers.

His restless eyes sought her, and followed her every movement about the ward. She had to leave him for a few minutes, but her heart never left him. When she came back she saw that his whole being had waited for her. She bent over him and he whispered confidentially, "Did they take it off?"

Sister Magnet shook her head. "Oh, dear, no!" she said. "Most certainly not. We're going to save it."

"Sure?" the boy repeated.

"Quite sure," said Sister Magnet with an imperturbable serenity she was very far from feeling. "I don't want you to talk," she added.

The boy's eyes smiled again, wavered, and shut. She felt the leap of the rising fever in his pulse.

He was in for a bad night.

Morphia would dull the appalling pain, but it wouldn't help him. Nothing would help him but his youth, and his confidence in her. She stayed by him, hour after hour; her mind felt singularly lucid and unhurried, like some inspired General in a desperate battle.

She had never felt her own strength so exciting before. It flowed out against the boy's danger, dauntlessly and without effort.

He was awake again now, dragged back into the being of pain; but he was not quite drowned in it. From time to time he would meet her eyes and feel conscious that she was still keeping him up—his head had not sunk beneath the deep, submerging sea.

At the last possible moment she gave him up reluctantly into the hands of the night sister.

When she came on again in the early morning she found him much worse.

He knew her at once, and gasped out, " Sister, don't leave me ! "

" I shall stay with you all day," she said firmly.

Half a lifetime had been sucked into the boy's interminable night, but he felt there was hope for him now. That unhurried tranquillity of hers again upheld him. He felt as if wings were over him, soft, strong wings, shielding him from all attack.

Sister Magnet did an unprecedented thing : she asked for help in the ward. She explained to the matron that if they wanted this case to pull through he must have a special, and that she must be his special. The matron had never received a suggestion from Sister Magnet before. Docility and prompt obedience were her undeviating record. It was on the tip of the matron's tongue to say, " He must take his chance with the rest," when Sister Magnet surprisingly forestalled her. She literally took her by the arm and drew her to the side of Duncan McAllister's bed.

Duncan opened his misty eyes. There seemed a thousand frightful clouds rushing across the sky—blotting out the mercy of the light.

" Sister ! Sister ! " he cried urgently. " Are you there ? "

" Yes," said Sister Magnet, " and nothing else is here."

The clouds ceased their erratic rushes, the bed-clothes, orderly and cool where his burning body did not touch them, weren't the bottom of a trench after all. He tried to smile again. " Of course, if you say so ——" he muttered.

" Well," the matron said, consideringly, " I will see what I can do," and as matrons can do anything, Nurse Magnet knew that her first point was gained.

She adjusted the screen and settled into the battle. At night she left him for a few hours with strict injunctions to the night sister to wake her if there was any change. But she was never long away from him. His urgent eyes held her as nothing in her life had ever held her before. It was motherhood at last.

This boy was her child ; she was protecting him with her very breath, carrying him beneath her heart. There was no moment of her waking or sleeping life that was not at his service, holding up his flickering soul.

The leg had to go, but he was too ill to know it, and still the temperature stood at 105 degrees, and still his life hung on her hands, and she saw the hours, clear and unmoving like crystal waters, between her and the distant land.

¶

HIS people came down from the North. She had not remembered that he would have people. There had been a miscarriage of telegrams, and forty-eight hours' delay ; but they came at last—a tall, grey-haired old General, and a very thin and eager woman, who put her hand up to her mouth and smiled at Nurse Magnet with Duncan's very smile.

Sister Magnet considered them reflectively ; she thought he was too ill for parents, even such parents as these.

" He's very, very weak," she explained gently, " and confused with the fever, you know—don't stay for more than a moment or two, because he's in such pain, and pain makes people nervous at seeing relatives."

She didn't tell them to be controlled or quiet, because she saw they could never be anything else. They moved noiselessly round the screen and looked at Duncan. He lifted his harried eyes, driven by the pursuit of poison, and knew them.

Nurse Magnet drew back a little, but his sharp whisper, " Sister, Sister ! " brought her to his side. " Send them away," he muttered thickly.

His eyes rested on them with the dreadful accusing gravity of pain. He did not smile at them. They seemed to take the air he breathed. Their tenderness shook him, even their self-control threatened his own.

He was bearing all he could—he couldn't bear their muffled pain as well.

" Don't—let—Pussy—come ! " he gasped with breathless pauses between his words.

" Oh — *not* Pussy, my darling ? " exclaimed his mother.

" Not Pussy," he repeated very gravely, and shut his eyes.

His father could stand no more, and hurried out of the ward. But his mother still stood there looking down at him, as if she could not believe in this separation of his wounded spirit from her heart.

Nurse Magnet laid her hand very gently on Mrs. McAllister's and drew her away.

" He's not himself," she said reassuringly; " you see, madam, he's not himself."

But beneath her low-toned sympathy a sharp joy ran—the self that was not himself was hers.

When they had gone, Duncan said to her, "Keep them away! Don't let them come again—they interrupt me. I only want you."

Nurse Magnet did not wish to be interrupted either. She had two enemies on whom all her attention was fixed—poison and fever.

She worked unceasingly, and with every ounce of her skill and force, against them both. She never sat down except to eat. She prayed and worked on her feet all day long.

She saw expedients when no one else saw them and devised alleviations.

She demanded, she did not suggest, remedies from the House Surgeon, and the House Surgeon, who had never been known to accept the mildest hint from the matron herself, humbly seconded her.

He explained afterwards that nurses ought always to be purely subordinate, but that there is just one occasion in a blue moon, when they get a kind of possession, if at least they have (as probably one in a thousand has) the real nursing instinct, and when this takes them they know everything, even the secrets of the blood, and had better be allowed to go their own way.

Nurse Magnet had never acted on her own initiative in her life before; she did not realise that she was acting on it now. She only knew that she saw what must be done, and did it, and that nothing, not even authority, appeared in the light of an obstacle.

She meant to save Duncan McAllister's life, and after three weeks' incessant touch and go, she saved it.

She saw suddenly, after an awful, unforgettable night, his temperature had moved, not in the racing zigzag she was accustomed to, but slowly, with a perfectly new steadiness, point by point, downwards.

His eyes were different: they no longer looked submerged. He slept naturally and lightly, without the weight of stupor.

Nurse Magnet sat down opposite the bed and slept too. She did not pray, but her sleep was prayer: it was a lifting up of her tired heart in gratitude and repose.

When she awoke he was still sleeping. There was no sound in the room, the stillness of dawn had covered all the restless noises of the night.

Every one slept; the night sister in the passage outside was making herself an early cup of tea.

Duncan opened his eyes and met Nelly's. He asked for something to drink—usually he never asked for anything, he only looked at her; but in his eyes now there was the birth of a separate consciousness.

She gave him some hot milk without answering him, but her hand shook as she prepared it. After he had taken it he said, "Will my people come to-day, sister?"

"They come every day," said Sister Magnet, "but you haven't felt up to talking to them, so they just take a look at you and go away."

"To-day I feel different," said Duncan, with his charming, tentative smile. "Thanks to you, you know, sister! Aren't you awfully tired of me?"

Sister Magnet shook her head.

"I'm never tired," she said slowly, "of people who need me."

He said reassuringly that he needed her all right, and went to sleep again.

That morning a box of roses came for him. Sister Magnet had never seen such roses: their petals were a dark velvety red, and they had a delicate pungent scent.

There was a note with them. The boy read it and flushed, and laid it down close by him, as if, although he had read it, he had not finished with it.

Sister Magnet loved flowers almost too much. She thought it was nearly sacrilegious to love a created thing with such intensity. Fortunately there was no doubt God had created flowers.

She put the roses with exquisite care into a high vase and placed them where Duncan could see them without moving his eyes.

She went down to breakfast, and when she came up again the sister who had been taking her place said, "Your boy is better to-day. Why, I actually heard him give Joseph a telephone message. You've got him round the corner at last."

"Yes," said Sister Magnet thoughtfully, "I think I have got him round the corner."

It was a wonderful morning for Sister Magnet. The House Surgeon said to her in the hearing of the other sisters, "Well, Sister Magnet, you've done the finest bit of surgical nursing I've ever seen in my life. Frankly, I didn't give that boy one chance in a thousand, and, what's more, I don't believe he had it. You made his chance."

The consultant surgeon sent for her to the matron's room and made her a set speech of congratulation even more

formidable, and had no idea at all that he was crowning this extremely quiet and deserving person with thorns.

Duncan saw his father and mother alone that afternoon. They stayed a long time, and when they came out their faces were transfigured; and then Duncan had another visitor.

Nurse Magnet met her in the passage outside the ward. She was twenty, perhaps, and her hair was an extraordinarily light gold, like the halo of saints in pictures, her eyes the most vivid, laughing blue, and her cheeks had the colour of spring blossoms.

She moved down the long, narrow passage like the passing of a sunbeam.

She stopped before Nurse Magnet with an easy, gracious smile—the smile of a young creature who has never known any power in unkindness.

"Are you," she said, "by any chance Mr. McAllister's nurse?"

"Yes," said Sister Magnet.

"I'm so glad," said the Vision sweetly, "because I can thank you. They say you've been so perfectly splendid—and he's getting better?"

"Yes, he's getting better," said Sister Magnet.

"And I'm—well, you see," the Vision bit a lip that was made for laughter, "I'm specially interested in that, because I'm——"

"Oh, I know who you are," interrupted Sister Magnet. "You're Pussy."

Katherine Lonsdale's very blue eyes turned a little frosty. "Pussy" was his pet name for her, but she saw in a flash that the woman in front of her had not meant to be familiar; she was a quiet, kind, old thing—"a perfectly hideous old thing," the Vision thought her, but not the tiresome sort who gets familiar.

"I am Katherine Lonsdale," she said, "and I expect he may have called me Pussy. We're engaged you see. Did he—did he talk much about me when he was delirious?"

"I can't say that he did," said Nurse Magnet consideringly. "It was the trenches, you see, he talked of—and his men—they're like that mostly. It's what they've felt responsible for. But he said your name once; and I remembered it.

"You'll find him in the corner on the right."

"Oh, thank you," said the Vision.

Sister Magnet stood quite still in the empty passage. Most mothers have to face this moment. Then she said to something that was rebellious in her heart, "But it's natural for young things to love each other," and turned away from Nature to that other Service, which was to hold her all her days. Her bones ached, and her eyes burned and smarted from sleeplessness, but she held her head up as if she were not tired.

She went downstairs to the matron's office.

"If you please, matron," she said with her usual embarrassed docility, "I don't think number seven wants a special any more. Shall I take back the Ward?"

The Gay Commodore

THE commodore's person was at all times an object of admiration; much more so on this occasion, when every singularity was aggravated by the circumstances of his dress and disaster.

He had put on, in honour of his nuptials, his best coat of blue broad cloth, cut by a taylor of Ramsgate, and trimmed with five dozen of brass buttons, large and small; his breeches were of the same piece, fastened at the knees with large bunches of tape; his waistcoat was of red plush, lapelled with green velvet, and garnished with vellum holes; his boots bore an intimate resemblance, both in colour and shape, to a pair of leather buckets; his shoulder was graced with a broad buff belt, from whence depended a huge hanger with a hilt like that of a backsword; and on each side of his pummel appeared a rusty pistol, rammed in a case covered with a bear-skin. The loss of his tye-periwig and laced hat, which were curiosities of the kind, did not at all contribute to the improvement of the picture, but, on the contrary, by exhibiting his bald pate, and the natural extension of his lanthorn jaws, added to the peculiarity and extravagance of the whole.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT.

In Nature's Cathedral

Unceasing Life in The Forest.

A FOREST knows no universal slumber, for the sleep of the trees is the wakening of many lesser things. Though the grey trunk lifts upward into a suspended animation of branch and twig, yet its surface is mottled with much busy life. The mosses fruit and thrive; the lichens are plump, and stretch forth growing fingers to paint the bole and bough with wafers, discs, washes of ebony and ochre and silver-grey. The underwoods sparkle with tufts and cushions of glimmering green, here dark, here emerald bright and shining. Much renewed minor life also wakens from the carpet of the fallen foliage. The trees indeed sleep, but they also dream. In the heart of every leafless oak a dryad whispers that the days are fleeting; that the icy-footed winter hours are dancing with the snow wreaths away in their chill processions; that the fountains and the sap will soon rise again to Spring's unsealing; that swiftly will the bud-sheath swell, and pale, and shimmer silky down, like a cast-off veil at the feet of the vernal beeches. Eden Phillpotts.

Choristers of The Woods

THE Harivansa says "An abode without birds is like a meat without seasoning." Such was not my abode, for I found myself suddenly neighbour to the birds; not by having imprisoned one, but having caged myself near them. I was not only nearer to some of those which commonly frequent the garden and the orchard, but to those wilder and more thrilling songsters of the forest which never, or rarely, serenade a villager. Henry David Thoreau.

"IF I could whisper you all I know,"
Said the Old Fool in the Wood,
"You'd never say that green leaves grow.
You'd say 'Ah, what a happy mood
The Master must be in to-day,
To think such thoughts,'
That's what you'd say." Alfred Noyes.

More Quickly Destroyed Than Cities.

IT takes an age to build a city, but an hour involves it in ruin. A forest is long in growing, but in a moment it may be reduced to ashes. Seneca.

Where Great Spirits Rested.

THERE is a serene and settled majesty in forest scenery that enters into the soul and dilates and elevates it, and fills it with noble inclinations. The ancient and hereditary groves, too, that embower this island are most of them full of story. They are haunted by the recollections of the great spirits of past ages who have sought for relaxation among them from the tumult of arms or the toils of state, or have wooed the muse beneath their shade. William Gilpin.

Better to See Well Than to Possess.

IT is not mere words to say that he who goes through a rich man's park and sees things in it which never bless the mental eyesight of the possessor, is richer than he. He is richer. More results of pleasure come home to him. The ground is actually more fertile to him: the place haunted with finer shapes. He has more servants to come at his call and administer to him with full hands. Knowledge, sympathy, imagination, are all divining rods, with which he discovers treasure. Let a painter go through the grounds, and he will see not only the general colours of green and brown, but their combinations and contrasts, and the modes in which they might again be combined and contrasted. He will also put figures in the landscape if there are none there, flocks and herds, or a solitary spectator, or Venus lying with her white body among the violets and primroses.

Let a musician go through and he will hear " differences discreet " in the notes of the birds and the lapsing of the waterfall. He will fancy a serenade of wind instruments in the open air at a lady's window, with a voice rising through it ; or the horn of the hunter ; or the musical cry of the hounds, " Matched in mouth like bells, each under each " ; or a solitary voice in a bower, singing for an expected lover ; or the chapel organ, waking up like the fountain of the winds. Let a poet go through the grounds, and he will heighten and increase all these sounds and images. He will bring the colours from heaven, and put an unearthly meaning into the voice.

Leigh Hunt.

I STEPPED into a wood, with pleasant care,
Opening the twining branches, that imposed
Desirable hindrance ; angrily screamed
A swiftly-darting throstle on before me ;
Two bees adown the narrow pathway flew,
And a bewildered butterfly ; I stayed
To joy in the delicious noise of leaves,
In the fresh earthly smells ; I wandered on
Past the slow-pacing pheasant and the jay,
Who would not let me leave him, but still followed
With his harsh scream. And now I reached an opening,
A short-turfed lawn, that fenced by silvery stems
Of circling beeches, seemed a quiet home.
I entered ; flowingly between the trees
Floated the blackbird's strains ; they paused, I paused,
Raising in sympathy to the tranquil heaven
My tranquil thought.

Ebenezer Jones.

A Feast For All Senses.

THE air was heavy with the scent of flowers, and quivering with the murmur of the stream, the humming of the colibris and insects, the cheerful song of birds, the gentle cooing of a hundred doves ; while now and then, from far away, the musical wail of the sloth or the deep toll of the bell-bird came softly to the ear. What was not there which eye or ear could need ? And what which palate could need either ? For on the rock above, some strange tree, leaning forward, dropped every now and then a luscious apple upon the grass below, and huge wild plantains bent beneath their load of fruit.

Charles Kingsley.

A Screen To Hide Too Garish Sights.

IN the bosom of the woods—concealed from profane eyes—lie hid the ruins of Netley Abbey; there may be richer and greater houses of religion, but the abbot is content with his situation. See there, at the top of that hanging meadow, under the shade of those old trees that bend into a half-circle about it, he is walking slowly (good man!), and bidding his beads for the souls of his benefactors, interred in that venerable pile that lies beneath him. Beyond it—the meadow still descending—nods a thicket of oaks that mask the building, and have excluded a view too garish and luxuriant for a holy eye; only on either hand they leave an opening to the blue glittering sea. THOMAS GRAY.

IT'S merrye walkyng in the fayre forest,
To heare the smalle birdes song. OLD BALLAD.

Attractive Even To The Fancy.

TREES have about them something beautiful and attractive even to the fancy, since they cannot change their places, are witnesses of all the changes that take place around them; and as some reach a great age, they become, as it were, historical monuments; and like ourselves they have a life, growing and passing away—not being inanimate and unvarying like the fields and rivers. One sees them passing through various stages, and at last, step by step, approaching death, which makes them look still more like ourselves. Hence the interest attaching to them is quite sufficient to arrest all minds and affect all hearts.

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT.

WHO, that ever on a Sabbath morn,
Sent through this leafy roof a prayer to heaven,
And when the sweet bells burst upon the air,
Saw the leaves quiver, and the flecks of light
Leap like caressing angels to the feet
Of the church-going multitude, but felt
That here God's day was holier—that the trees
Pierced by these shining spires, and echoing ever
"To prayer! To prayer!" were but the lofty roof
Of an unknown cathedral, in whose choirs
Breezes and storm-winds, and the many birds
Joined in the varied anthem. NATHANIEL PARKER WILLIS.

Vistas That Move The Imagination.

HUNDREDS of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march of the Roman soldiery, flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious green sward; in some places they were intermingled with beeches, hollies and copse wood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking sun; in others they receded from each other, forming those long sweeping vistas, in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of silvan solitude. SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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The Persecution of Bob Pretty

A most amusing hunt for big game in Claybury

By W. W. JACOBS

THE old man sat on his accustomed bench outside the Cauliflower. A generous measure of beer stood in a blue-and-white jug by his elbow, and little wisps of smoke curled slowly upwards from the bowl of his churchwarden pipe. The knapsacks of two young men lay where they were flung on the table, and the owners, taking a noontide rest, turned a polite, if bored, ear to the reminiscences of grateful old age.

"Poaching," said the old man, who had tried topics ranging from early turnips to horse-shoeing—"poaching ain't wot it used to be in these 'ere parts. Nothing is like it used to be, poaching nor anything else; but that there man you might ha' noticed as went out about ten minutes ago and called me 'Old Truthfulness' as 'e passed is the worst one I know. Bob Pretty 'is name is, and of all the sly, artful, deceiving men that ever lived in Claybury 'e is the worst—never did a honest day's work in 'is life, and never wanted the price of a glass of ale.

Bob Pretty's worst time was just after old Squire Brown died. The old squire couldn't afford to preserve much, but by-and-by a gentleman with plenty of money, from London, named Rockett, took 'is place and things began to look up. Pheasants was 'is favourites, and 'e spent no end o' money rearing of 'em, but anything that could be shot at suited 'im, too.

He started by sneering at the little game that Squire Brown 'ad left, but all 'e could do didn't seem to make much difference; things disappeared in a most egg-strordinary way, and the keepers went pretty near crazy, while the things the squire said about Claybury and Claybury men was disgraceful.

Everybody knew as it was Bob Pretty and one or two of 'is mates from other places, but they couldn't prove it. They couldn't catch 'im nohow, and at last the squire 'ad two keepers set off to watch 'im by night and by day.

Bob Pretty wouldn't believe it; he said 'e couldn't. And even when it was pointed out to 'im that Keeper Lewis was follering of 'im he said that it just 'appened he was going the same way, that was all. And sometimes he'd get up in the middle of the night and go for a fifteen-mile walk 'cos 'e'd got the toothache, and Mr. Lewis, who 'adn't got it, had to tag along arter 'im till he was fit to drop. O' course, it was one keeper the less to look arter the game, and by-and-by the squire see that and took 'im off.

All the same they kept a pretty close watch on Bob, and at last one arternoon they sprang out on 'im as he was walking past Gray's farm, and asked him wot it was he 'ad got in his pockets.

"That's my bisness, Mr. Lewis," ses Bob Pretty.

Mr. Smith, the other keeper, passed 'is hands over Bob's coat and felt something soft and bulgy.

"You take your 'ands off of me," ses Bob; "you don't know 'ow partikler I am."

He jerked 'imself away, but they caught 'old of 'im agin, and Mr. Lewis put 'is hand in his inside pocket and pulled out two brace o' partridges.

"You come along of us," he ses, catching 'im by the arm.

"We've been looking for you a long time," ses Keeper Smith, "and it's a pleasure for us to 'ave your company."

Bob Pretty said 'e wouldn't go, but they forced 'im along and took 'im all the way to Cudford, four miles off, so that Policeman White could lock 'im up for the night. Mr. White was a'most as pleased as the keepers, and 'e warned Bob solemn not to speak becos all 'e said would be used agin 'im.

"Never mind about that," ses Bob Pretty. "I've got a clear conscience, and talking can't 'urt me. I'm very glad to see you, Mr. White; if these two clever.

experienced keepers hadn't brought me I should 'ave looked you up myself. They've been and stole my partridges."

Them as was standing round laughed, and even Policeman White couldn't 'elp giving a little smile.

"There's nothing to laugh at," ses Bob, 'olding his 'ead up. "It's a fine thing when a working man—a 'ardworking man—can't take home a little game for 'is family without being stopped and robbed."

"I s'pose they flew into your pockets?" ses Policeman White.

"No, they didn't," ses Bob. "I'm not going to tell any lies about it; I put 'em there. The partridges in my inside coat pocket and the bill in my waistcoat pocket."

"The *bill?*" ses Keeper Lewis, staring at 'im.

"Yes, the bill," ses Bob Pretty, staring back; "the bill from Mr. Keen, the poulterer, at Wickham."

He fetched it out of 'is pocket and showed it to Mr. White, and the keepers was like madmen a'most 'cos it was plain to see that Bob Pretty' ad been and bought them partridges just for to play a game on 'em.

"I was curious to know wot they tasted like," he ses to the policeman. "Worst of it is, I don't s'pose my pore wife'll know 'ow to cook 'em."

"You get off 'ome," ses Policeman White, staring at 'im.

"But ain't I goin' to be locked up?" ses Bob. "'Ave I been brought all this way just to 'ave a little chat with a policeman I don't like?"

"You go 'ome," ses Policeman White, handing the partridges back to 'im.

"All right," ses Bob, "and I may 'ave to call you to witness that these 'ere two men laid hold o' me and tried to steal my partridges. I shall go up and see my loryer about it."

He walked off 'ome with his 'ead up as high as 'e could hold it, and the airs 'e used to give 'imself arter this was terrible for to behold. He got 'is eldest boy to write a long letter to the squire about it, saying that 'e'd overlook it this time, but 'e couldn't promise for the future. Wot with Bob Pretty on one side and Squire Rockett on the other, them two keepers' lives was 'ardly worth living.

Then the squire got a head-keeper named Cutts, a man as was said to know more about the ways of poachers than they did themselves. He was said to 'ave cleared out all the poachers for miles round the place 'e came from, and pheasants could walk into people's cottages and not be touched.

He was a sharp-looking man, tall and thin, with screwed-up eyes and a little red beard. The second day 'e came 'e was up here at this 'ere Cauliflower, having a pint o' beer and looking round at the chaps as he talked to the landlord. The odd thing was that men who'd never taken a hare or a pheasant in their lives could 'ardly meet 'is eye, while Bob Pretty stared at 'im as if 'e was a wax-works.

"I 'ear you 'ad a little poaching in these parts afore I came," ses Mr. Cutts to the landlord.

"I think I 'ave 'eard something o' the kind," ses the landlord, staring over his head with a far-away look in 'is eyes.

"You won't hear of much more," ses the keeper. "I've invented a new way of catching the dirty rascals; afore I came 'ere I caught all the poachers on three estates. I clear 'em out just like a ferret clears out rats."

"Sort o' man-trap?" ses the landlord.

"Ah, that's telling," ses Mr. Cutts.

"Well, I 'ope you'll catch 'em here," ses Bob Pretty; "there's far too many of 'em about for my liking. Far too many."

"I shall 'ave 'em afore long," ses Mr. Cutts, nodding his 'ead.

"Your good 'ealth," ses Bob Pretty, holding up 'is mug. "We've been wanting a man like you for a long time."

"I don't want any of your impidence, my man," ses the keeper. "I've 'eard about you and nothing good either. You be careful."

"I am careful," ses Bob, winking at the others. "I hope you'll catch all them low poaching chaps; they give the place a bad name, and I'm a'most afraid to go out arter dark for fear o' meeting 'em."

Peter Gubbins and Sam Jones began to laugh, but Bob Pretty got angry with 'em and said he didn't see there was anything to laugh at. He said that poaching was a disgrace to their native place, and instead o' laughing they ought to be thankful to Mr. Cutts for coming to do away with it all.

"Any help I can give you shall be given cheerful," he ses to the keeper.

"When I want your help I'll ask you for it," ses Mr. Cutts.

"Thankee," ses Bob Pretty. "I on'y

'ope I sha'n't get my face knocked about like yours 'as been, that's all; 'cos my wife's so partikler."

"Wot d'ye mean?" ses Mr. Cutts, turning on him. "My face ain't been knocked about."

"Oh, I beg your pardin," ses Bob; "I didn't know it was natural."

Mr. Cutts went black in the face a'most and stared at Bob Pretty as if 'e was going to eat 'im, and Bob stared back, looking fust at the keeper's nose and then at 'is eyes and mouth, and then at 'is nose agin.

"You'll know me agin, I s'pose?" ses Mr. Cutts, at last.

"Yes," ses Bob, smiling; "I should know you a mile off—on the darkest night."

"We shall see," ses Mr. Cutts, taking up 'is beer and turning 'is back on him. "Those of us as live the longest'll see the most."

"I'm glad I've lived long enough to see 'im," ses Bob to Bill Chambers. "I feel more satisfied with *myself* now."

Bill Chambers coughed, and Mr. Cutts, arter finishing 'is beer, took another look at Bob Pretty, and went off boiling a'most.

¶

THE trouble he took to catch Bob Pretty arter that you wouldn't believe, and all the time the game seemed to be simply melting away, and Squire Rockett was finding fault with 'im all day long. He was worn to a shadder a'most with watching, and Bob Pretty seemed to be more prosperous than ever.

Sometimes Mr. Cutts watched in the plantations, and sometimes 'e hid 'imself near Bob's house, and at last one night, when 'e was crouching behind the fence of Frederick Scott's front garden, 'e saw Bob Pretty come out of 'is house, and, arter a careful look round, walk up the road. He held 'is breath as Bob passed 'im, and was just getting up to foller 'im when Bob stopped and walked slowly back agin, sniffing.

"Wot a delicious smell o' roses!" he ses out loud.

He stood in the middle o' the road nearly opposite where the keeper was hiding, and sniffed so that you could ha' heard him the other end o' the village.

"It can't be roses," he ses, in a puzzled voice, "becos there ain't no roses hereabouts, and besides, it's too late for 'em. It must be Mr. Cutts, the clever new keeper."

He put his 'ead over the fence and bid 'im good evening, and said wot a fine night for a stroll it was, and asked 'im whether 'e was waiting for Frederick Scott's aunt. Mr. Cutts didn't answer 'im a word; 'e was pretty near bursting with passion. He got up and shook 'is fist in Bob Pretty's face, and then 'e went off stamping down the road as if 'e was going mad.

And for a time Bob Pretty seemed to 'ave all the luck on 'is side. Keeper Lewis got rheumatic fever, which 'e put down to sitting about night arter night in damp places watching for Bob, and, while 'e was in the thick of it, with the doctor going every day, Mr. Cutts fell in getting over a fence and broke 'is leg. Then all the work fell on Keeper Smith, and to 'ear 'im talk you'd think that rheumatic fever and broken legs was better than anything else in the world. He asked the squire for 'elp, but the squire wouldn't give it to 'im, and he kept telling 'im wot a feather in 'is cap it would be if 'e did wot the other two couldn't do, and caught Bob Pretty. It was all very well, but, as Smith said, wot 'e wanted was feathers in 'is piller, instead of 'aving to snatch a bit o' sleep in 'is chair or sitting down with his 'ead agin a tree. When I tell you that 'e fell asleep in this public-'ouse one night while the landlord was drawing a pint o' beer he 'ad ordered, you'll know wot 'e suffered.

O' course, all this suited Bob Pretty as well as could be, and he was that good-tempered 'e'd got a nice word for everybody, and when Bill Chambers told 'im 'e was foolhardy 'e only laughed and said 'e knew wot 'e was about.

But the very next night 'e had reason to remember Bill Chambers's words. He was walking along Farmer Hall's field—the one next to the squire's plantation—and, so far from being nervous, 'e was actually a-whistling. He'd got a sack over 'is shoulder, loaded as full as it could be, and 'e 'ad just stopped to light 'is pipe when three men burst out o' the plantation and ran towards 'im as 'ard as they could run.

Bob Pretty just gave one look and then 'e dropped 'is pipe and set off like a hare. It was no good dropping the sack, because Smith, the keeper, 'ad recognised 'im and called 'im by name, so 'e just put 'is teeth together and did the best he could, and there's no doubt that if it 'adn't ha' been for the sack 'e could 'ave got clear away.

As it was, 'e ran for pretty near a mile, and they could 'ear 'im breathing like a pair o' bellows; but at last 'e saw the game was up. He just managed to struggle as far as Farmer Pinnock's pond, and then, waving the sack round his 'ead, 'e flung it into the middle of it, and fell down gasping for breath.

"Got—you—this time—Bob Pretty," ses one o' the men, as they came up.

"Wot—*Mr. Cutts?*" ses Bob, with a start.

"That's me, my man," ses the keeper.

"Why—I thought—you was—— Is that *Mr. Lewis?* It can't be."

"That's me," ses Keeper Lewis. "We both got well sudden-like, Bob Pretty, when we 'eard you was out. You ain't so sharp as you thought you was."

Bob Pretty sat still, getting 'is breath back and doing a bit o' thinking at the same time.

"You give me a start," he ses, at last. "I thought you was both in bed, and, knowing 'ow hard-worked Mr. Smith 'as been, I just came round to 'elp 'im keep watch like. I promised to 'elp you, Mr. Cutts, if you remember."

"Wot was that you threw in the pond just now?" ses Mr. Cutts.

"A sack," ses Bob Pretty; "a sack I found in Farmer Hall's field. It felt to me as though it might 'ave birds in it, so I picked it up, and I was just on my way to your 'ouse with it, Mr. Cutts, when you started arter me."

"Ah!" ses the keeper, "and wot did you run for?"

Bob Pretty tried to laugh. "Becos I thought it was the poachers arter me," he ses. "It seems ridiklous, don't it?"

"Yes, it does," ses Lewis.

"I thought you'd know me a mile off," ses Mr. Cutts. "I should ha' thought the smell o' roses would ha' told you I was near."

Bob Pretty scratched 'is 'ead and looked at 'im out of the corner of 'is eye, but he 'adn't got any answer. Then 'e sat biting his finger-nails and thinking, while the keepers stood argyfying as to who should take 'is clothes off and go into the pond arter the pheasants. It was a very cold night and the pond was pretty deep in places, and none of 'em seemed anxious.

"Make 'im go in for it," ses Lewis, looking at Bob, "'e chucked it in."

"On'y becos I thought you was poachers." ses Bob. "I'm sorry to have caused so much trouble."

"Well, you go in and get it out," ses Lewis, who pretty well guessed who'd 'ave to do it if Bob didn't. "It'll look better for you, too."

"I've got my defence all right," ses Bob Pretty. "I ain't set a foot on the squire's preserves, and I found this sack a 'undred yards away from it."

"Don't waste more time," ses Mr. Cutts to Lewis. "Off with your clothes and in with you. Anybody'd think you was afraid of a little cold water."

"Whereabouts did 'e pitch it in?" ses Lewis.

Bob Pretty pointed with 'is finger exactly where 'e thought it was, but they wouldn't listen to 'im, and then Lewis, arter twice saying wot a bad cold he'd got, took 'is coat off very slow and careful.

"I wouldn't mind going in to oblige you," ses Bob Pretty, "but the pond is so full o' them cold, slimy efts; I don't fancy them crawling up agin me, and, besides that, there's such a lot of deep holes in it. And wotever you do don't put your head under; you know 'ow foul that water is."

Keeper Lewis pretended not to listen to 'im. He took off 'is clothes very slowly and then 'e put one foot in and stood shivering, although Smith, who felt the water with his 'and, said it was quite warm. Then Lewis put the other foot in and began to walk about careful, arfway up to 'is knees.

"I can't find it," he ses, with 'is teeth chattering.

"You 'aven't looked," ses Mr. Cutts; "walk about more; you can't expect to find it all at once. Try the middle."

Lewis tried the middle, and 'e stood there up to 'is neck, feeling about with his foot and saying things out loud about Bob Pretty, and other things under 'is breath about Mr. Cutts.

"Well, I'm going off 'ome," ses Bob Pretty, getting up. "I'm too tender-'earted to stop and see a man drownded."

"You stay 'ere," ses Mr. Cutts, catching 'old of him.

"Wot for?" ses Bob; "you've got no right to keep me 'ere."

"Catch 'old of 'im, Joe," ses Mr. Cutts, quick-like.

Smith caught 'old of his other arm, and Lewis left off trying to find the sack to watch the struggle. Bob Pretty fought 'ard,

and once or twice 'e nearly tumbled Mr. Cutts into the pond, but at last he gave in and lay down panting and talking about 'is loryer. Smith 'eld him down on the ground while Mr. Cutts kept pointing out places with 'is finger for Lewis to walk to. The last place 'e pointed to wanted a much taller man, but it wasn't found out till too late, and the fuss Keeper Lewis made when 'e could speak agin was terrible.

" You'd better come out," ses Mr. Cutts ; " you ain't doing no good. We know where they are and we'll watch the pond till daylight—that is, unless Smith 'ud like to 'ave a try."

" It's pretty near daylight now, I think," ses Smith.

Lewis came out and ran up and down to dry 'imself, and finished off on his pocket-'andkerchief, and then with 'is teeth chattering 'e began to dress 'imself. He got 'is shirt on, and then 'e stood turning over 'is clothes as if 'e was looking for something.

" Never mind about your stud now," ses Mr. Cutts ; " hurry up and dress."

" *Stud?* " ses Lewis, very snappish. " I'm looking for my trowsis."

" Your trowsis ? " ses Smith, 'elping 'im look.

" I put all my clothes together," ses Lewis, a'most shouting. " Where are they ? I'm 'arf perished with cold. Where are they ? "

" He 'ad 'em on this evening," ses Bob Pretty, " 'cos I remember noticing 'em."

" They must be somewhere about," ses Mr. Cutts ; " why don't you use your eyes ? "

He walked up and down, peering about, and as for Lewis he was 'opping round 'arf crazy.

" I wonder," ses Bob Pretty, in a thoughtful voice, to Smith—" I wonder whether you or Mr. Cutts kicked 'em in the pond while you was struggling with me. Come to think of it, I seem to remember 'earing a splash."

" He's done it, Mr. Cutts," ses Smith ; " never mind, it'll go all the 'arder with 'im."

" But I do mind," ses Lewis, shouting. " I'll be even with you for this, Bob Pretty. I'll make you feel it. You wait till I've done with you. You'll get a month extra for this, you see if you don't."

" Don't you mind about me," ses Bob ; " you run off 'ome and cover up them legs of yours. I found that sack, so my conscience is clear."

Lewis put on 'is coat and waistcoat and set off, and Mr. Cutts and Smith, arter feeling about for a dry place, set theirselves down and began to smoke.

" Look 'ere," ses Bob Pretty, " I'm not going to sit 'ere all night to please you ; I'm going off 'ome. If you want me you'll know where to find me."

" You stay where you are," ses Mr. Cutts. " We ain't going to let you out of our sight."

" Very well, then, you take me 'ome," ses Bob. " I'm not going to catch my death o' cold sitting 'ere. I'm not used to being out of a night like you are. I was brought up respectable."

" I dare say," ses Mr. Cutts. " Take you 'ome, and then 'ave one o' your mates come and get the sack while we're away."

Then Bob Pretty lost 'is temper, and the things 'e said about Mr. Cutts wasn't fit for Smith to hear. He threw 'imself down at last full length on the ground and sulked till the day broke.

¶

KEEPER Lewis was there a'most as soon as it was light, with some long hay-rakes he borrowed, and I should think that pretty near 'arf the folks in Claybury 'ad turned up to see the fun. Mrs. Pretty was crying and wringing 'er 'ands ; but most folk seemed to be rather pleased that Bob 'ad been caught at last.

In next to no time 'arf-a-dozen rakes was at work and the things they brought out o' that pond you wouldn't believe. The edge of it was all littered with rusty tin pails and saucepans and such-like, and by-and-by Lewis found the things he'd 'ad to go 'ome without a few hours afore, but they didn't seem to find that sack, and Bob Pretty, wot was talking to 'is wife, began to look 'opeful.

But just then the squire came riding up with two friends as was staying with 'im, and he offered a reward of five shillings to the man wot found it. Three or four of 'em waded in up to their middle then and raked their 'ardest, and at last Henery Walker give a cheer and brought it to the side all heavy with water.

" That's the sack I found, sir," ses Bob, starting up. " It wasn't on your land at all, but on the field next to it. I'm an honest, 'ardworking man, and I've never been in

trouble afore. Ask anybody 'ere and they'll tell you the same."

Squire Rockett took no notice of 'im. "Is that the sack?" he asks, turning to Mr. Cutts.

"That's the one, sir," ses Mr. Cutts. "I'd swear to it anywhere."

"You'd swear a man's life away," ses Bob. "'Ow can you swear to it when it was dark?"

Mr. Cutts didn't answer him. He went down on 'is knees and cut the string that tied up the mouth o' the sack, and then 'e started back as if 'e'd been shot, and 'is eyes a'most started out of 'is 'ead.

"What's the matter?" ses the squire.

Mr. Cutts couldn't speak; he could only stutter and point at the sack with 'is finger, and Henery Walker, as was getting curious, lifted up the other end of it and out rolled about a score of as fine cabbages as you could wish to see.

I never see people so astonished afore in all my born days, and as for Bob Pretty 'e stood staring at them cabbages as if 'e couldn't believe 'is eyesight.

"And that's wot I've been kept 'ere all night for," he ses at last, shaking his head. "That's wot comes o' trying to do a kindness to keepers, and 'elping of 'em in their difficult work. P'r'aps that ain't the sack arter all, Mr. Cutts. I could ha' sworn they was pheasants in the one I found, but I may be mistook, never 'aving 'ad one in my 'ands afore. Or p'r'aps somebody was trying to 'ave a game with you, Mr. Cutts, and deceived me instead."

The keepers on'y stared at 'im.

"You ought to be more careful," ses Bob. "Very likely while you was taking all that trouble over me, and Keeper Lewis was catching 'is death o' cold, the poachers was up at the plantation taking all they wanted. And, besides, it ain't right for Squire Rockett to 'ave to pay Henery Walker five shillings for finding a lot of old cabbages. I shouldn't like it myself."

He looked out of the corner of 'is eye at the squire, as was pretending not to notice Henery Walker touching 'is cap to him, and then 'e turns to 'is wife and he ses:

"Come along, old gal," 'e ses. "I want my breakfast bad, and arter that I shall 'ave to lose a honest day's work in bed."

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Mademoiselle Perle

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

In contrast to the first story in this series I am presenting this month a story which treats the same theme from an entirely different angle. It is the work of a master-hand who needs no introduction to "Argosy" readers, and whose skill and judgment in the difficult art of expressing restrained emotion are without parallel.—Ed.

WHAT a strange notion indeed of mine to choose Mademoiselle Perle for queen this evening.

Every year I go to my old friend Chantal's for Twelfth-night. My father, whose most intimate friend he was, used to take me there when a child. I have kept up the custom, and no doubt will continue to keep it up as long as I live, and as long as there is a Chantal in this world.

The Chantals, I ought to say, lead a singular existence; they live at Paris as if they were at Yvetot, or Pont-à-Mousson.

They have a house with a small garden near the Observatory. There they live their own life as if they were in the country. Of Paris, the real Paris, they have no knowledge and no suspicion: they are so far, far away from it! Sometimes, however, they take a journey. Madame Chantal goes to lay in supplies, as they say in the family. This is how they lay in supplies.

Mademoiselle Perle, who keeps the keys of the pantry-presses (for the linen-presses are administered by the mistress of the house), Mademoiselle Perle notices that the sugar is running down, that the preserves are exhausted, that there is not much more left at the bottom of the coffee-sack.

Thus warned against famine, Madame Chantal inspects the remains, and takes notes in a note-book. Then, when she has written a great many figures, she plunges first into long calculations, then into long discussions with Mademoiselle Perle. The upshot of it is, however, that they come to an agreement and settle upon the quantities of each article that they will provide for a quarter.

This done, they fix the day for their shopping, and set out in a cab, a cab with a rail, to a biggish grocer, whose shop is across the bridges, in the new districts.

Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Perle make this expedition in company, mysteriously, and come home at dinner-time quite exhausted, though still excited, and shaken up in the cab, the top of which is covered with parcels and bags.

For the Chantals all Paris on the other side of the Seine is the new districts, districts inhabited by a strange population, noisy, not too honest, that passes its days in dissipation, its nights in feasting, and makes ducks and drakes of its money. Nevertheless the young ladies are now and again taken to the Théâtre Français, when the piece is approved by the newspaper that M. Chantal reads.

The young ladies are now nineteen and seventeen years old; they are two pretty girls, tall and fresh, very well brought up, too well brought up, so well brought up that they pass unnoticed like two pretty dolls. It would never enter my head to pay attentions or to pay court to Mesdemoiselles Chantal: one scarcely dares to speak of them, they seem so immaculate.

As for their father, he is a charming man, very well informed, very frank, very cordial, but whose one desire is repose and peace and quietness, and who is largely responsible for thus mummifying his family in order to live as he desires in stagnant immobility. He reads a great deal, is fond of conversation, is easily touched. The absence of all contact, elbowing and collisions has made him very sensitive. The least thing excites him, agitates him, and hurts him.

Yet the Chantals do have some acquaintances, but restricted acquaintances, carefully selected in their neighbourhood. As for me, I dine with them on the 15th of August and on Twelfth-night. The latter is part of my duty, like a Catholic's Easter communion.

On the 15th of August some friends are invited, but on Twelfth-night I am the only guest.

II

SO this year, as in other years, I have been dining at the Chantals' to celebrate Epiphany.

According to custom I embraced M. Chantal, Madame Chantal and Mademoiselle Perle, and made a profound bow to Mesdemoiselles Louise and Pauline. They asked me a thousand questions, about town gossip, about politics, about popular opinion on the events in Tonkin, and about our representatives. Madame Chantal, a stout lady, whose ideas always give me the impression that they are squared like so many hewn stones, had a habit of enouncing the phrase, " That will bear evil fruit some day," as the conclusion of every political discussion. Why have I always imagined that Madame Chantal's ideas are square ? I do not know, the fact remains that everything she says assumes this shape in my mind ; a square, a big square with four equal angles. There are other persons whose ideas always seem to be round and rolling like circles.

At dessert, the Twelfth-cake was brought in. Now, every year M. Chantal was king. Whether that was a repeated coincidence or a family arrangement, I do not know, but he used infallibly to find the bean in his share of the cake, and used to proclaim Madame Chantal queen. So I was astounded to feel in a mouthful of cake something very hard, which almost broke a tooth for me. I carefully removed the thing from my mouth and saw a little china doll no bigger than a bean. In my surprise, I exclaimed, " Ah ! " They looked at me, and Chantal clapped his hands and shouted, " Gaston's got it ! Gaston's got it ! Long live the king ! Long live the king ! "

Everybody repeated in chorus, " Long live the king ! " and I blushed up to my ears, as one will blush, for no reason whatever, in rather foolish situations. I sat looking down at the cloth, with the scrap of china in my finger and thumb, and at a loss what to say or do, when Chantal resumed, " Now, you must choose a queen."

At that I was overwhelmed. In a second, a thousand thoughts, a thousand suppositions, flashed through my mind. Did they mean me to single out one of the Chantal girls ? Was this a plan for making me say which one I preferred ? Was it a gentle, slight, insensible impulse from the parents towards a possible marriage ? The notion of marriage is constantly lurking in all those houses with grown-up daughters, and takes all sorts of forms, all sorts of disguises, all sorts of measures. I felt horribly afraid of compromising myself, and also excessively timid in face of the obstinately correct and composed attitude of Mesdemoiselles Louise and Pauline. To elect one of them to the detriment of the other was, to my mind, as difficult as to choose between two drops of water ; and, besides, I was dreadfully scared by the fear of risking myself in an affair where I should be led on to marriage against my will by procedures so discreet as this trumpery royalty.

But all at once I had an inspiration, and I offered the symbolical doll to Mademoiselle Perle. They were all surprised at first ; then they undoubtedly appreciated my delicacy and my discretion, for they applauded furiously. " Long live the queen, long live the queen ! " they shouted.

As for her, poor old maid, she had lost countenance entirely : she trembled, quite scared, and stammered, " Oh no. . . Oh no. . . . Oh no . . . not me. . . . I pray you . . . not me. . . . I pray you ! "

At that I considered Mademoiselle Perle for the first time in my life.

I was accustomed to seeing her in that house, as one sees the old tapestry armchairs on which one has sat from childhood, without ever noticing them. Some day, no one knows why, because a sunbeam falls on the chair, one says, " Why, this is very interesting." And one discovers that the wood has been wrought by an artist, and that the covering is remarkable. I had never taken any notice of Mademoiselle Perle.

She was a member of the Chantal household, and nothing more. But why, on what footing ?—She was a tall, thin person, who kept herself in the background, but was not insignificant. They treated her better than a housekeeper, not so well as a relative. Now, however, I grasped some fine distinctions which I had not troubled about before ! Madame Chantal said " Perle," the girls, " Mademoiselle Perle," and Chantal always called her " Mademoiselle," though perhaps more respectfully.

I began to consider her.—What was her age ? Forty ? Yes, forty.—She was not an old maid, she was growing old. This observation suddenly occurred to me. She did her hair, dressed, adorned herself in a ridiculous fashion, yet for all that she was not ridiculous, she had such a simple, natural grace about her, a veiled grace, studiously concealed. What a strange creature, to be sure ! Why had I never observed her better ? She did her hair in a grotesque fashion, in little, droll,

old-fashioned ringlets. Yet under this antiquated Virgin's hairdressing appeared a broad, calm forehead, scored by two deep wrinkles, two wrinkles of long-continued griefs, then two blue eyes, large and gentle, so timid, so startled, so humble, two beautiful eyes that had remained so innocent; so full of maiden astonishment, of youthful sensations, and also of disappointments that had entered into them and softened without troubling them.

Her whole face was intelligent and discreet, one of those faces which have toned down without being worn out by the fatigues or the great emotions of life.

What a pretty mouth! and what pretty teeth! Yet one would have said that she dared not smile!

And suddenly I compared her with Madame Chantal! Why, to be sure! Mademoiselle Perle was handsomer, a hundred times handsomer, more intelligent, more noble, more dignified.

I was stupefied with the result of my observations. Champagne was poured out. I held my glass towards the queen, and proposed her health in a well-turned compliment. She would have liked, I could see, to hide her face in her napkin. Then, as she dipped her lips in the clear wine, every one cried, "The queen drinks, the queen drinks!" At that she blushed all over and choked; but I could see that she was greatly beloved in that house.

III

AS soon as dinner was over, Chantal took me by the arm. It was the hour for his cigar, a sacred hour. When he was alone, he went out to smoke it in the street; when he had any one to dinner, they went up to the billiard-room, and he smoked as he played. This evening they had even lighted a fire in the billiard-room in honour of Twelfth-night, and my old friend took his cue, a very thin cue, which he chalked with great care, and then he said:

"You lead off, my boy!"

For he always called me "my boy," in spite of my five-and-twenty years; but then he had seen me when I was a baby.

So I commenced the game; I made some cannons, and missed others; but, as Mademoiselle Perle was always running through my mind, I suddenly asked:

"I say, Monsieur Chantal, is Mademoiselle Perle any relation of yours?"

He stopped playing in great surprise, and looked at me.

"What, don't you know! Have you never heard Mademoiselle Perle's story?"

"No."

"Did your father never tell you?"

"No."

"Well, well, that is strange! That is indeed strange! Why, it is quite a romance!"

He was silent, then began again:

"If you only knew how singular it is that you should ask me that question to-day, on Twelfth-night!"

"Why?"

"Ah! Why? Listen. It was forty-one years ago, forty-one years this very day, Epiphany. We were then living at Roüy-le-Tors, on the ramparts. But I must first describe the house, in order that you may understand properly. Roüy is built on a slope, or rather on a knoll which commands a wide extent of that country. We had a house there with a fine hanging garden, supported in the air by the old city walls. So the house was in the town, in the street, while the garden overlooked the plain. There was also a postern-gate from this garden to the country, at the foot of a secret staircase which went down in the thickness of the walls, like those read of in romances. A road passed by this gate, which was furnished with a big bell, for the peasants used to bring their provisions that way to escape the long round about.

"You can see the places, can't you? Well, that year, on Twelfth-day, it had been snowing for a week. It looked like the end of the world. It chilled our very soul when we went to the ramparts to look at the plain, the great white landscape, all white, icy, shining like varnish. It looked as if the good Lord had wrapped up the Earth to send it to the lumber-room of old worlds.

"The whole family was together at that moment, and we were numerous, my father, my mother, my uncle and aunt, my two brothers, and my four cousins; pretty girls they were. I am married to the youngest. Of all that company there are only three alive now, my wife, myself, and my sister-in-law at Marseilles. Bless me, how a family slips away! I was fifteen then; now I am fifty-six.

"Well, we were going to keep Twelfth-night, and we were very merry! All were in the drawing-room waiting dinner, when my elder brother, Jacques, suddenly said, 'There's a dog been howling in the plain

for the last ten minutes. It must be some poor beast that is lost.'

" We had not finished speaking when the garden-bell rang. It had a deep church-bell tone, which made one think of the dead. We all shivered at the sound. My father called the servant and told him to go and look. There was perfect silence as we waited; we were thinking of the snow that covered all the earth. When the man returned, he declared that he had seen nothing. The dog was still howling incessantly.

" We sat down to table, but we were still a little upset, especially we young people. All went nicely until the joint, when, hark, the bell began ringing again, three times in succession, three great, long peals, which thrilled us to our finger-tips and made us catch our breath. We sat looking at each other, our forks in the air, still listening, seized with a sort of supernatural fear.

" At last my mother spoke. 'It is extraordinary that they should have waited so long before coming back. Do not go alone, Baptiste; one of these gentlemen will go with you.'

" My uncle François rose. He was a Hercules, and afraid of nothing on earth. My father said to him, 'Take a gun. You never know what it may be.'

" But my uncle only took a stick, and went out at once with the servant.

" We others remained behind, trembling with terror and anxiety, without eating, without speaking. My father tried to reassure us. 'You will see,' he said, 'that it will be some beggar or some traveller lost in the snow. After he rang the first time, seeing that the door was not opened he has tried to find his way, then, failing to do so, he has come back to our door.'

" We felt as if our uncle's absence lasted an hour. Then he returned furious and swearing. 'There's nothing, as I'm alive! Some one's playing a trick! There's nothing but that confounded dog howling a hundred yards away from the walls. If I had had my gun, I'd have shot him!'

" We sat down again, but we all continued anxious. We felt that this was not the end of it, and that presently the bell would ring again.

" And it did sound, at the very moment when we were cutting the Twelfth-cake. All the men got up together. My uncle François, who had drunk some champagne, declared that he was going to massacre IT, so furiously that my mother and my aunt caught hold of him to stop him. My father, in spite of being quite calm and not very fit (he dragged one leg ever after it had been broken by a fall from a horse), declared in his turn that he wanted to know what it was, and that he was going. My brothers, aged nineteen and twenty, ran to get their guns; and as no one paid much attention to me, I took a rook-rifle and so prepared to accompany the expedition.

" It set out at once. My father and my uncle led, with Baptiste carrying a lantern. My brothers Jacques and Paul followed, and I brought up the rear in spite of the entreaties of my mother, who remained with her sister and my cousins on the door-step.

" The snow had begun again the last hour, and the trees were laden. The pines were bending under the heavy dusky mantle, like white pyramids, or enormous sugar loaves; and through the grey curtain of fine hurrying flakes it was almost impossible to make out the smaller shrubs, all pale in the gloom. The snow was falling so quickly that nothing else could be seen ten paces off. But the lantern threw a great light before us. When we began to descend the corkscrew staircase hollowed in the thickness of the wall, I was afraid in good earnest. I felt as if some one was walking behind me; as if some one was about to catch me by the shoulders and carry me off; and I wanted to go home. But, as I should have had to go all the way back through the garden, I did not dare.

" I heard the door to the plain being opened; then my uncle began to swear. 'Hang it! he's off again. If I could see his shadow, I'd not miss him, the——'

" It was eerie to see the plain, or rather to feel it was there before one; for it could not be seen, all that was visible was an endless veil of snow.

" My uncle spoke again, 'Wait, there is the dog howling. I'll go and show it how I can shoot. That will always be something.'

" But my father, who was a kindly man, replied, 'Better go and look for the poor animal that's crying with hunger. It's barking for help. It's calling like a human being in distress. Let's go to it.'

" And we set out through that curtain, through that dense unceasing fall, through that powder that filled the night and the air, that moved, floated, fell, and froze the flesh as it melted.

" We sank to the knees in the soft chill dust, and had to step very high to walk at all. As we advanced the dog's bark became clearer and louder. My uncle cried, ' There it is ! '

" For my part I could see nothing ; then I made up with the others, and I made it out. The dog was a fearful and fantastic sight ; a great black dog, a sheep-dog, with shaggy hair and a head like a wolf, standing on all fours at the very end of the long beam of light cast by the lantern on the snow. He did not move ; he was quiet now, and was looking at us.

" My uncle said, ' It is strange, he does not come at us, and he does not run away. I have a good mind to take a shot at him.'

" But my father said decidedly, ' No, we must catch him.'

" Thereupon my brother Jacques said, ' But he is not alone. There's something beside him.'

" And there was something beside him, something grey, indistinct. We began to advance again carefully.

" When the dog saw us approaching, he squatted down on his hindquarters. He did not look savage ; he seemed pleased that he had succeeded in attracting somebody.

" My father went straight up to him and caressed him. The dog licked his hands, and we saw that he was tied to the wheel of a little carriage, a sort of toy carriage completely enveloped in three or four woollen wraps. We took these cloths off carefully, and when Baptiste held his lantern to the door of the go-cart, which was like a kennel on wheels, we saw a little baby inside asleep.

" We were so dumbfounded that we could not utter a word. My father was the first to recover himself, and, as he was a large-hearted man, and somewhat of a visionary, he laid his hand on the top of the carriage and said, ' Poor forsaken child, you shall be one of us ! ' And he ordered my brother Jacques to wheel our find in front of us.

" And my father continued, thinking aloud :

" ' Some love-child whose poor mother has come and rung at my door this Epiphany night, thinking of the Christ-child.'

" He stopped again, and four times shouted through the night at the pitch of his voice to the four corners of the heavens, ' We have taken it up ! ' Then, putting his hand on his brother's shoulder, he murmured, ' If you had shot at the dog, François ? . . .'

" My uncle gave no answer, but he made a great sign of the cross, for he was very devout, in spite of his swaggering airs.

"The dog had been untied, and followed us.

" I can assure you our return to the house was a pretty sight indeed. First we had a lot of trouble to get the carriage up the rampart stair : but we managed at last, and wheeled it into the hall.

" How amused, and pleased, and frightened mamma was ! As for my four little cousins (the youngest was six), they were like four hens round a nest. At last the baby, which was still sleeping, was taken out of its carriage. It was a girl, about six weeks old. And in its clothes we found ten thousand francs in gold, yes, ten thousand francs, which papa invested for her dowry. So she was not the child of poor parents . . but perhaps the child of a nobleman and some small citizen's daughter . . . or else . . we formed a thousand conjectures but we never learned anything . . . no, not a thing . . . not a thing . . . . Even the dog was not recognised by any one. He was strange to these parts. In any case, he or she who came three times and rang at our door must have known my parents well.

" So that is how Mademoiselle Perle made her entrance at six weeks' age to the Chantal family.

" We did not call her Mademoiselle Perle until later, however. She was baptised Marie Simonne Claire ; Claire was to serve as her surname.

" I can tell you it was a funny return to the dining-room with the small mite, now awake, who gazed about her at the people and the lights with her big wondering blue eyes.

" We sat down once more and the cake was cut up. I was king, and I chose Mademoiselle Perle as my queen, just as you did just now. She was unconscious then of the honour that was done her.

" Well, the child was adopted and brought up as one of the family. She grew up, years passed on. She was a nice, gentle, obedient child. Every one loved her, and she would have been dreadfully spoiled, if my mother had not prevented that.

" My mother was a woman of order and hierarchy. She consented to treat little Claire as she did her own sons, but at the

same time she took care that the distance between us was clearly marked.

" Therefore, as soon as the child was old enough to understand, she explained her story to her, and gently, indeed tenderly, impressed upon the little one's mind that her relation to the Chantals was that of an adopted daughter, welcome, no doubt, but still a stranger.

" Claire grasped the situation with singular intelligence, and with surprising intuition. She learned to accept the place assigned to her with such tact, grace, and delicacy that it moved my father to tears.

" My mother, too, was so touched by the passionate gratitude and the timid devotion of the darling, tender creature that she took to calling her ' my daughter.' Sometimes, when the little one had done something good, my mother would push her spectacles up on her brow, always a sign of emotion with her, and repeat, ' Why, she's a pearl, a regular pearl, the child ! ' The name stuck to little Claire, who became and remained for us Mademoiselle Perle."

IV

MONSIEUR CHANTAL ceased speaking. He was seated on the billiard-table, dangling his feet, his left hand playing with a ball, while his right fiddled with a cloth which was used for wiping the chalk-marks off the scoring-slate, and which from its use we called the chalk-cloth. Rather red, his voice indistinct, he was speaking to himself now, lost in his recollections, going gently through the bygone things and the old events that were waking in his mind, as one strolls through the old gardens of the home where one was brought up, and where each tree, each path, each plant, the prickly hollies, the sweet-smelling laurels, the yews, whose fat red berries crush between one's figures, evoke at every step some little fact of our past life, one of those insignificant and delicious facts that make up the very foundation, the very warp of existence.

As for me, I stood there facing him, my back leaning against the wall, my hands supported on my unused billiard-cue.

After a minute he resumed.

" Ah, me ! How pretty she was at eighteen . . . and gracious . . . and perfect . . . Ah ! what a pretty . . . pretty . . . pretty and kind . . . and good . . . and charming girl ! . . . She had eyes . . blue eyes . . . transparent . . . clear . . . the like of which I have never seen . . . never ! "

He lapsed into silence again. I asked, " Why has she never married ? "

He replied, not to me, but to the word " married " that had been let fall :

" Why ? Why ? She never wished to . . . never wished. Though she had thirty thousand francs dowry, and was asked several times . . . she never wished to ! She seemed sad in those days. That was when I married my cousin, little Charlotte, to whom I had been engaged for six years."

I looked at M. Chantal, and it seemed to me that I saw into his soul, that I suddenly saw into one of those humble and cruel dramas of honourable hearts, upright hearts, of hearts without reproach, into one of those mute, unexplored hearts, which no one has understood, not even those who are their uncomplaining victims.

And suddenly impelled by a daring curiosity, I blurted out :

" Should not you have married her, Monsieur Chantal ? "

He trembled, looked at me, and said :

" I ? Marry whom ? "

" Mademoiselle Perle."

" Why so ? "

" Because you loved her better than your cousin."

He looked at me with strange, round, startled eyes, then he stammered :

" I loved her . . . I ? . . . How ? Who told you that ? . . ."

" Why, any one can see it . . . and that's why you were so long in marrying your cousin, who waited six years for you."

He dropped the ball that he was holding in his left hand, seized the chalk-cloth with both hands, and, hiding his face with it, began to sob into it. He wept in a distressing, ridiculous way, as a sponge weeps when it is squeezed, from his eyes and nose and mouth all at once. And he coughed and hawked, blew his nose into the chalk-cloth, wiped his eyes, sneezed, began running again from every aperture in his face, with a throaty noise that suggested gargling.

As for me, frightened and ashamed, I wanted to make my escape and was at my wits' end to know what to say, or to do.

And suddenly Madame Chantal's voice sounded on the stairs, " Will you soon be done with your smoke ? "

I opened the door and called, " Yes, Madame, we are coming down."

Then I rushed to her husband, and

seizing him by the elbows said, " Monsieur Chantal, my good friend Chantal, listen; your wife is calling you; pull yourself together, pull yourself together at once; we must go downstairs; pull yourself together."

He stammered, " Yes . . . yes . . . I'm coming . . . poor girl . . . I'm coming . . . tell her I'll be ready in a moment."

And he began conscientiously to wipe his face with the cloth that had been wiping all the marks off the slate for two or three years. When he finished, he showed half white, half red, his brow, his nose, his cheeks, his chin all smeared with chalk, and his eyes swollen and still full of tears.

I took him by the hands and dragged him into his room, murmuring, " I beg your pardon, I do indeed, Monsieur Chantal, for having given you pain . . . but . . . I did not know . . you . . .you understand."

He pressed my hand, " Yes . . . yes . . . there are some awkward moments . . ."

Then he plunged his face into the basin. When he lifted his head he still did not look presentable, but I thought of a little ruse. As he looked rather uncomfortably at himself in the glass, I said to him, " It will do if you tell them that you have some dust in your eye, and you can let them see it watering as much as you like."

So he went downstairs rubbing his eyes with his handkerchief. They made a fuss about him; everyone wanted to look for the speck of dust, which was not to be found.

As for me, I had rejoined Mademoiselle Perle, and I was watching her, tormented by a burning curiosity, a curiosity which was becoming torture. She must really have been very pretty once, with her gentle eyes, so large, so calm, so open that they looked as if she never closed them as other people do. Her dress was rather ridiculous, a regular old maid's toilet, and, without making her look a fright, did not set her off.

I seemed to see into her soul, as I had seen into M. Chantal's a little while before, as if I surveyed from end to end her simple, devoted life; but a necessity forced my lips, an imperious necessity of questioning her, of learning if she too had loved him; if she had suffered like him from that long-drawn sorrow, secret and acute, which none knows, none sees, none suspects, but which finds vent at night, in the solitude of the darkened room. I looked at her, I saw her heart beating under her muslin bodice, and I asked myself whether that sweet, frank face had groaned night by night in the moist thickness of her pillow, and sobbed in the fever of her burning bed.

And I said to her, cautiously, as children do when they break a trinket to see inside it, " If you had seen M. Chantal crying just now, you would have been sorry for him."

She trembled, " What? He was crying?"

" Yes, he was crying."

" And why was he? "

She seemed very much perturbed. I replied :

" Because of you."

" Because of me? "

" Yes. He was telling me how much he used to love you, and what it cost him to marry his present wife instead of you . . ."

Her pale face seemed to me to lengthen a little; her eyes, always open, her calm eyes closed suddenly, so quickly that they seemed to have closed for ever. She slipped from her chair to the floor, and collapsed there gently, gradually, as a fallen veil might have done.

I cried, " Help, help! Mademoiselle Perle is unwell."

Madame Chantal and her daughters rushed to her, and, as they went for water, I got my hat and escaped.

I hurried away, my heart torn, my mind full of remorse and regret. And yet now and again I was glad; I felt as if I had done something commendable and necessary.

I kept asking myself, " Was I wrong? Was I right? " They had that in their souls like a bullet in a healed-up wound. Will they not be happier now? It was too late to renew their torture, and not too late for them to remember with fondness.

And perhaps some evening next spring, moved by a moonbeam falling through the branches on the grass at their feet, they will take each other's hands and clasp them in memory of all that suppressed cruel suffering; and perhaps, too, that brief clasp will send through their veins a little of that thrill which otherwise they would never had known, and will excite in those dead ones, resuscitated in an instant, the swift, divine sensation of that intoxication, that madness, which gives lovers more happiness in one thrill than other men can gather in a lifetime.

(Another Great Love Story will appear next month)

The Most Dangerous Game

Of a strange passion and a still stranger adventure.

By RICHARD CONNELL

"OFF there to the right—somewhere—is a large island," said Whitney. "It's rather a mystery——"

"What island is it?" Rainsford asked.

"The old charts call it 'Ship-Trap Island,'" Whitney replied. "A suggestive name, isn't it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don't know why. Some superstition——"

"Can't see it," remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

"You've good eyes," said Whitney, with a laugh, "and I've seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall brush at four hundred yards, but even you can't see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night."

"Nor four yards," admitted Rainsford. "Ugh! It's like moist velvet."

"It will be light enough in Rio," promised Whitney. "We should make it in a few days. I hope the jaguar guns have come from Purdey's. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting."

"The best sport in the world," agreed Rainsford.

"For the hunter," amended Whitney. "Not for the jaguar."

"Don't talk rot, Whitney," said Rainsford. "You're a big-game hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar feels?"

"Perhaps the jaguar does," observed Whitney.

"Bah! They've no understanding."

"Even so, I rather think they understand one thing at least—fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death."

"Nonsense," laughed Rainsford. "This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes. The hunters and the hunted. Luckily, you and I are hunters. Do you think we've passed that island yet?"

"I can't tell in the dark. I hope so."

"Why?" asked Rainsford.

"The place has a reputation—a bad one."

"Cannibals?" suggested Rainsford.

"Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn't live in such a God-forsaken place. But it's got into sailor lore, somehow. Didn't you notice that the crew's nerves seemed a bit jumpy to-day?"

"They were a bit strange, now you mention it. Even Captain Nielsen——"

"Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who'd go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was: 'This place has an evil name among seafaring men, sir.' Then he said to me, very gravely: 'Don't you feel anything?'—as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn't laugh when I tell you this—I did feel something like a sudden chill.

"There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the island then. What I felt was a—a mental chill—a sort of sudden dread."

"Pure imagination," said Rainsford. "One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship's company with his fear."

"Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible thing—with wave lengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I'm glad we're getting out of this zone. Well, I think I'll turn in now, Rainsford."

"I'm not sleepy," said Rainsford. "I'm going to smoke another pipe up on the afterdeck."

"Good-night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast."

"Right. Good-night, Whitney."

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there, but the muffled throb

of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favourite briar. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. " It's so dark," he thought, " that I could sleep without closing my eyes ; the night would be my eyelids——"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, some one had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation ; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it ; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realised he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea closed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain cool-headedness had come to him ; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by some one aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender, and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes, and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies ; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes desperately ; he could do possibly a hundred more and then—

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the darkness, a high, screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognise the animal that made the sound ; he did not try to ; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again ; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.

" Pistol shot," muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears—the most welcome he had ever heard—the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them ; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness ; he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigour ; a sharp hunger was pricking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

" Where there are pistol shots, there are men. Where there are men, there is food," he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place ? An unbroken front of snarled and jagged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees ; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he had landed, he stopped.

Some wounded thing, by the evidence a large animal, had thrashed about in the underbrush ; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated ; one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

" A twenty-two," he remarked. " That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal, too. The hunter had his nerve to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed

his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find—the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Bleak darkness was blacking out the sea and jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coast line, and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building—a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial château; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.

"Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall, spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker was real enough; yet about it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard footsteps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall. The door opened then, opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring, and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen—a gigantic creature, solidly made and black-bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barrel revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not change. The revolver pointed as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform, a black uniform trimmed with grey astrakhan.

"I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said: "It is a very great pleasure and honour to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military moustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very bright. He had high cheek bones, a sharp-cut nose, a spare, dark face, the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat. Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack," said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I.

"Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

¶

IT was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining-room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a mediæval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory table where two score men could sit down to eat. About the hall were the mounted heads of many animals—lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

"You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted, the table appointments were of the finest, the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating *borsch*, the rich, red soup with sour cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said: "We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilisation here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognised your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well cooked filet mignon. "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

"Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile. Then he said slowly: "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."

"Really?"

"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."

"What have you imported, general?" Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"

The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigarette case and offered his guest a long black cigarette with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game——" began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port, Mr. Rainsford?"

"Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said: "God makes some men poets. Some he makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an ardent sportsman. When I was only five years old he gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear

in the Caucasus when I was ten. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army—it was expected of noblemen's sons—and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed."

The general puffed at his cigarette.

"After the débâcle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there. Many noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tea room in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt—grizzlies in your Rockies, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning. They weren't." The Cossack sighed. "They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America business men often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life."

"Yes, that's so," said Rainsford.

The general smiled. "I had no wish to go to pieces," he said. "I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase."

"No doubt, General Zaroff."

"So," continued the general, "I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer."

"What was it?"

"Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call 'a sporting proposition.' It had become too easy. I always got my quarry. Always. There is no greater bore than perfection."

The general lit a fresh cigarette.

"No animal had a chance with me any more. That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason. When I thought of this it was a tragic moment for me, I can tell you."

Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.

"It came to me as an inspiration what I must do," the general went on.

"And that was?"

The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted it with success. "I had to invent a new animal to hunt," he said.

"A new animal? You are joking."

"Not at all," said the general. "I never joke about hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes—there are jungles with a maze of trails in them, hills, swamps——"

"But the animal, General Zaroff?"

"Oh," said the general, "it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits."

Rainsford's bewilderment showed in his face.

"I wanted the ideal animal to hunt," explained the general. "So I said: 'What are the attributes of an ideal quarry?' And the answer was, of course: 'It must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.'"

"But no animal can reason," objected Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "there is one that can."

"But you can't mean——" gasped Rainsford.

"And why not?"

"I can't believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke."

"Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting."

"Hunting? Good God, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder."

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. "I refuse to believe that so modern and civilised a young man as you seem to be harbours romantic ideas about the values of human life. Surely your experiences in the war——" He stopped.

"Did not make me condone cold-blooded murder," finished Rainsford stiffly.

Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll you are!" he said. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naïve, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuff-box in a limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to have had. I'll wager you'll forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."

"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."

"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think I can show you that your scruples are quite ill founded."

"Yes?"

"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if needs be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth—sailors from tramp ships—lascars, blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels—a thoroughbred horse or hound is worth more than a score of them."

"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.

"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. Then can reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."

"But where do you get them?"

The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship-Trap," he answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."

Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.

"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then, as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none: giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilised here."

"Civilised? And you shoot down men?"

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second, and he said, in his most pleasant manner: "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself to-morrow."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark *San Lucar* that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle."

He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest calibre and range. If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him"—the general smiled—"he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had the honour of serving as official knouter to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport. Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

"And if they win?"

The smile on the general's face widened.

"To date I have not lost," he said.

Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar. One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

" This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

" A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. " They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house—or out of it—something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the Folies Bergères.

" And now," said the general, " I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library? "

" I hope," said Rainsford, " that you will excuse me to-night, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling at all well."

" Ah, indeed? " the general inquired solicitously. " Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. To-morrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect——"

Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

" Sorry you can't go with me to-night," called the general. " I expect rather fair sport—a big, strong black. He looks resourceful—— Well, good-night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope that you have a good night's rest."

¶

THE bed was good and the pyjamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fibre of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate of sleep. He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the château were out now, and it was dark and silent, but there was a fragment of sallow moon, and by its wan light he could see dimly the courtyard; there, weaving in and out in the pattern of shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up, expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous about the state of Rainsford's health.

" As for me," sighed the general, " I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford. Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said: " Ennui. Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of Crêpes Suzette, the general explained: " The hunting was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with, and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of Chablis, Mr. Rainsford? "

" General," said Rainsford firmly, " I wish to leave this island at once."

The general raised his thickets of eyebrows; he seemed hurt. " But, my dear fellow," the general protested, " you've only just come. You've had no hunting——"

" I wish to go to-day," said Rainsford. He saw the dead black eyes of the general on him, studying him. General Zaroff's face suddenly brightened.

He filled Rainsford's glass with venerable Chablis from a dusty bottle.

" To-night," said the general, " we will hunt—you and I."

Rainsford shook his head. " No, general," he said. " I will not hunt."

The general shrugged his shoulders and delicately ate a hothouse grape. " As you wish, my friend," he said. " The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's? "

He nodded toward the corner to where the giant stood, scowling, his thick arms crossed on his hogshead of chest.

" You don't mean——" cried Rainsford.

" My dear fellow," said the general, " have I not told you I always mean what I say about hunting? This is really an inspiration. I drink to a foeman worthy of my steel—at last."

The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

" You'll find this game worth playing," the general said enthusiastically. " Your brain against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine. Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?"

" And if I win—" began Rainsford huskily.

" I'll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeated if I do not find you by midnight of the third day," said General Zaroff. " My sloop will place you on the mainland near a town."

The general read what Rainsford was thinking.

" Oh, you can trust me," said the Cossack. " I will give you my word as a gentleman and a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here."

" I'll agree to nothing of the kind," said Rainsford.

" Oh," said the general, " in that case— But why discuss it now? Three days hence we can discuss it over a bottle of Veuve Cliquot, unless——"

The general sipped his wine.

Then a businesslike air animated him. " Ivan," he said to Rainsford, " will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest, too, that you avoid the big swamp in the south-east corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There's quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford, I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta after lunch. You'll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You'll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don't you think? Au revoir, Mr. Rainsford, au revoir."

General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist. . . .

¶

RAINSFORD had fought his way through the bush for two hours. " I must keep my nerve. I must keep my nerve," he said through tight teeth.

He had not been entirely clear-headed when the château gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff, and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowels of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation.

He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.

" I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck off from the rude path he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative and he thought: " I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was near by, and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But, perhaps, the general was a devil——

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake, and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy grey was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focussed Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb, and through a screen of leaves, almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. The thing that was approaching him was a man.

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to

his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something small and metallic—an automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incenselike smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils. Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were travelling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Rainsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was a cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

He slid down from the tree, and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from his sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound, came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay man-catcher. Luckily for me, I too have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that carried him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker, denser; insects bit him savagely. Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his foot loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that someone in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in in France

when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared with his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the point sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming; he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigarette. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

¶

AT daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp.

The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a watercourse, not a quarter of a mile away, he could see the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force; Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped, too. They must have reached the knife.

He shinned excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford's brain when he climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again.

"Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could see the gloomy grey stone of the château. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea. . . .

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from a silver flask, lit a perfumed cigarette, and hummed a bit from "Madame Butterfly."

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great panelled dining hall that

evening. With it he had a bottle of Pol Roger and half a bottle of Chambertin. Two slight annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment. One was the thought that it would be difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course, the American hadn't played the game—so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner liqueur. In his library he read, to soothe himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius. At ten he went up to his bedroom. He was deliciously tired, he said to himself, as he locked himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called: "Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.

A man, who had been hiding in the curtains of the bed, was standing there.

"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"

"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."

The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have won the game."

Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "Get ready, General Zaroff."

The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford." . . .

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided.

The Village Green

WHAT a loss is that of the village green! It is a loss to the picturesque beauty of our village landscapes. A village green is almost always a subject for a painter who is fond of the quiet home scenes, with its old, knotty, wide-spread oak or elm or ash; its gray church-tower; its cottages scattered in pleasing disorder around, each looking out of its leafy nest; its flock of geese sailing to and fro across it. Where such spots are still found, they refresh the wayworn traveller, wearied by the interminable hedge walls with which "restless ownership"—to use an expression of Wordsworth's—excludes profane feet from its domain consecrated to Mammon. The main loss, however, is that to the moral beauty of our landscapes—that to the innocent, wholesome pleasures of the poor. The village green was the scene of their sports, of their games. It was the playground for their children. It served for trapball, for cricket, for manly humanising amusements, in which the gentry and farmers might unite with the peasantry.

AUGUSTUS AND JULIUS HARE.

Holiday Customs

LITTLE Britain may truly be called the heart's core of the City; the stronghold of true John Bullism. It is a fragment of London as it was in its better days, with its antiquated folks and fashions. Here flourish in great preservation many of the holiday games and customs of yore. The inhabitants most religiously eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday, hot-cross buns on Good Friday, the roast goose at Michaelmas; they send love-letters on Valentine's Day, burn the Pope on the fifth of November, and kiss all the girls under the mistletoe at Christmas. Roast beef and plum pudding are also held in superstitious veneration, and port and sherry maintain their grounds as the only two English wines; all others being considered vile and outlandish beverages.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

The Eighteenth Leap

Two loyal castaways and a dramatic escape

By VINGIE E. ROE

THE sea was blue as indigo, beautiful, molten blue, with little white whiffs of runners that rose and broke and rose again, sole hold-over from the majesty of storm that had swept the world of waters so short a time before. Small white clouds sailed in the soft blue sky, and a little wind whispered gently from the south.

On the shore of a gorgeous island, rock-ribbed and high, but lush with verdure, a man lay stretched to the sun, his white face upturned, his feet in the lazy surf that rippled back and forth.

Little he knew of the lovely small world about him, sunk in the darkness of insensibility. For one hour he lay, two. Then he stirred and moaned and fell silent again, while the golden sun rode up the heavens. At long intervals he moved and the breath in his water-logged lungs hurt him. But the sun warmed him, that splendid tropical sun, and the little soft wind was fresh as cool hands on a fevered brow, and at high noon he opened his dark eyes and looked up at the skies. For a long time he lay so in a half-suffering content and cared not a whit where he was.

Then nature and a keen mind asserted themselves and he rolled over and looked around. Instantly he raised himself on an elbow and the dark eyes became wide with wonder. He saw the gentle sea, the wide beach, the great spine of the island that rose behind, and knew.

Knew that the horror had been real, that catastrophe had ridden the night, for wreckage from the *Lady Gay* washed back and forth in a nearby cove, and two dead bodies that he knew lay farther down the shore.

That was all he ever knew of the fate of the schooner.

Hours later, when he had recovered from the shock and strain, he buried the two bodies—the mate and a seaman—and salvaged what he could of the floating stuff. There was food among it, casks and tins and brine-soaked boxes, and these he saved with a nice care.

All this took him several days, and when at last it was done he stood up and scanned the lone world that was his with tragic and speculative eyes.

"Off the regular course, naturally," he said aloud, that first sign of the utterly abandoned and alone, "and God knows where!"

He ran his fingers through his thick hair and drew a long breath.

"Twenty-eight," he said again, "with Stanford and Frisco Town behind me—and —Helen."

At that his whimsical mouth twisted sharply with a spasm which, to save his life, he could not have controlled.

"Mustn't think," he said, "get me, old man? Action, not introspection."

He threw a stone at a sea-gull and killed it outright.

Elated, he tried it again, and gathered up several of the birds.

He carried the gulls very carefully and, when he was back at the dry cave in which he had stored what he had salvaged, he used one of the few matches in his metal box to light a fire. This was an easy matter, for there was much material handy and it was light and dry.

"This fire," he said judicially when it brightened to a jolly flame, "is to be guarded. It shall be laid between stones presently and made permanent. Man and his fire—they are inimical."

¶

IN the days that followed he went exploring round his solitary world and found much of interest—living waters, sweet as honey, that ran from the beetling heights, rich verdure and strange plants with fruit that looked good to eat.

He found that the island was a picturesque oval, with a high spine running straight

through it from north to south, though at the southern end this rock-ribbed ridge came steeply down to lose itself in the level beach that circled it.

It was a glorious day, blue and bright, with the sea glass-smooth and a little wind coming in from the west. The man stood long, looking at the world of waters with never a sail nor a whiff of smoke to break its gay monotony. He snapped his fingers with an eloquence of resignation and turned away again.

"I know," he said, "*I* know! Can't fool me on this lay-out. It's far down—far down—for the *Lady Gay* was running deep off her course five days ago, when the first of the storm struck us.

"Ten years, maybe, or twenty. I've got a fairly good store of courage, but whether or not it's worth the candle I don't——"

He never finished that sentence. The words trailed off his lips in astonishment, for, keen and clear in the soft silence, a sound came cutting down from the heights above, a wild, shrill cry that brought his heart leaping in his throat—the unmistakable scream of a horse!

He raised his startled eyes, and there, standing on the extreme edge of the bluff, her beautiful body taut and leaning, her neck arched like a rainbow, her eager face bent down toward him, stood the most wonderful creature he had ever beheld.

He flung up a hand and started running for the foot of the cliff.

With eager feet and hands he charged against the ascent, which looked easy enough of access, and for the first quarter of the way he found it so, for there was evidence of a one-time way winding along the rocky slant. Then suddenly it became vastly steeper, and the weathering of the ridge had cast down its eternal sift, and the foothold became narrower.

And then, when he could see the edge of the tableland close above him, he came face to face with defeat.

Blocking the narrow way, a huge boulder lay like a wedge between him and his keen desire. For hours he worked to surmount it, to pry it loose with such sticks as he could find, retracing the difficult way to the beach, but without avail.

"The horse went up this very way, must have, some time, somehow—and the stone fell and left her there. Poor lass!" he said. He cast her gender instinctively, for it spoke with eloquence and force in every line of her slim body, looked out of her face as truly as from the features of a beautiful woman.

With the falling of the dusk, when the burgeoning sun sank into the sea, he went wearily down to stand on the beach and scan the cliff above. He looked eagerly all along the sharp edge standing against the sky in clear relief, but nothing living appeared thereon, and he could almost have believed himself the victim of hallucination. He put his fingers to his lips after the manner of his boyhood and blew a whistle that cut keenly out upon the silence.

He watched and listened, and blew again, and presently, from far up beyond the tall escarpment toward the north, he caught the faint echo of an answer—thin and fine and far, but the ringing quiver of a neigh.

With light in his eyes and an eager step he went home to his cave and its one comfort, the living fire banked in its stones.

At dawn he was up and planning a way to the flat tableland of the spine. He walked all around the island and studied the formation of the beetling ridge, but all to no avail. There was no other way save the blocked trail at the south.

The man stopped at the southern end of the island and, putting his fingers to his lips, blew that piercing whistle, and quick as an echo came the answer. When he rounded the foot of the ridge and went north on the east, toward his cave and the tie of his living fire, the mare was no longer visible, and he reasoned that this side of the tableland must be girded by a higher formation, since she had never appeared here, and he felt sure she would have followed this day, so keen did she seem to keep him in sight.

That night he slept lightly, and his dreams were troubled by the faint, fine neigh of a horse and filled with the sweet face of the girl he was giving up in his heart's heart.

He had found nothing on this island to justify a hope of ships touching, neither wreckage—save that from the ill-starred *Lady Gay*—nor old stones for fire, nor one stick laid upon another.

In the days that followed he put such energy into solving the mystery of the inaccessible crags as he had never given to anything in his life before, neither football nor aviation nor the winning of Helen—"with her misty eyes of blue—oh, heaven!"—or the making of money.

For you see how the diversified interests

of this blessed life of ours take each of a man's giving and become thrice precious because of their relative values.

Now he had nothing to do save sit and look at the gorgeous sea and cease to plan—that was before he looked up and saw the shining chestnut beauty in her enchanted country.

From that moment he was live as a wire.

He brought all his gifts of calculation to bear and studied the cliffs like an engineer, and every day he went around to the western side of the island and sent his whistle ringing to the heights; and always the answer came, sometimes near behind the rim-rock; and then the mare came quickly to look down upon him, again from afar, and he had to wait until she came running, to stop with her small hoofs beating the very edge. He had many a thrill in the slowly passing days from that very thing—the amazing grace and power and precision with which she stopped at the brink of certain death, there on the rim's thin blade.

"Some darling!" he cried to her, laughing. "A princess—a queen of your tribe! Sure in every sense—sight, hearing, the very *feeling* that stops you there with six inches between you and space! . . . I simply will get up there!"

He carried from the flotsam of the wreck an iron bar long as himself and, climbing up to the hanging stone, set himself the slow and almost hopeless task of picking out a hole behind it.

He made himself a crude calendar, and knew by that that it took him nine days of ceaseless effort.

At the end of that time he saw the blue sky through, and pulled his body out into the almost obliterated trail beyond the boulder. He was cramped and weary from the position in the narrow tunnel, and lay for a second looking down at the distant beach; but the sound of a sharp whistle brought him up on an elbow, and there, fairly leaning out, with her knees buckling as if to essay the perilous sheer way down to him, stood the wondrous chestnut mare—and she was even more beautiful than he had thought.

"Sweetheart!" he cried, as the wind lifted her cloud-like silver mane. "Oh, you eager beauty! Quicksilver!" and he knew on the instant that he had named her. Carefully he gathered himself up and crept along the trail. At the top, almost within reach, he stretched out a hand toward her.

For a second she stood, her great dark eyes afire, trembling in every limb, her nostrils shaking.

Then she broke and whirled and ran away from him, blind with fright.

But the man had conquered.

¶

QUICK with the exploring instinct, he went forward. Far to the north he could see the chestnut mare, stopped and turned toward him, her head high in the air.

He whistled and watched her.

Long, long had this lonely creature heard no voice but her own calling into the silence, seen no moving thing except the gulls.

Now the man who called and made no move to catch her, who went the other way—this creature drew her like a magnet, so that she came, tentatively, on stiff legs, with arching neck and blowing nostrils, to stand afar and watch him with her flaming eyes, to follow and stop and follow again.

All the golden day this went on, and the man compassed the long and narrow table-land, stood on the northern lip of the promontory where the sheer wall fell to the surging depths. He had brought what he could of the biscuit in his pockets, and that night he lay under the stars on the grassy floor and thought long thoughts—and all night long he heard the soft pad of light hoofs about him, the blowing of deep breaths in the darkness.

Quicksilver was aquiver with the mystery and wonder of his presence.

By dawn he was awake—and she stood, a ghostly shape in the red effulgence, a stone's throw away. He sat up—and she fled. He whistled, and she turned.

She leaned toward him so that her knees buckled, eager and afraid. But the sound of his coaxing voice began to still the fear, to call to an ancient love of man within her. She came closer, stretched out her velvet nose to sniff his scent. Again the man went from her—and this time she followed, trotting as if she feared to lose him.

When the gorgeous sun fell into the sea at dusk he touched her for a fleeting second, but he smiled like a boy with a new kite, so delighted was he.

The trick was done. In a few hours she was tamed to his hand, so gladly that she

hung at his heels like a dog; and all the next day he spent petting her as one strokes the thing he loves.

That day he was forced to go down the perilous way to the beach if he would save his fire. He debated bringing his precious stores up with him, to make his home on the tableland. It would be a heart-breaking task, that he knew.

At the trail's head, where it dropped down the wall, he took leave of Quicksilver, or tried to.

"Good-bye, little girl," he said whimsically; "I'll be back as soon as possible." And he stroked her shining neck and fondled her pretty lips. But the mare would have none of that farewell.

She crowded after him to the rim's lip, set her feet to the trail behind.

"Go back!" he cried, aghast. "Get back there!"

She reared at his lifted hand, but came down with her eyes shut and her nose outstretched, quivering with a nameless fear.

She came blindly after, and the man was forced to go back up the few steps he had descended.

"Now, what in this world am I to do?" he asked her again. "I've simply got to go, sweetheart."

But he sat on the rim and puzzled, while Quicksilver stood beside him gazing out to sea. So long as he was there she was content, but he could not get away from her.

At the end of an hour he rose.

"I'll have to go. We'll have to take our chance," he told her grimly; "if you fall—kismet. We're on the lap of the gods, anyway."

Straight to the boulder she came behind him, sure in the silt and weathered stone that filled the trail—and he knew instinctively that she had been there before.

But when he crawled, head first, into the narrow bore of his tunnel and disappeared, the scream that rent the quiet air cut to his heart. He heard her pounding at the rock with her sharp hoofs, and thought despairingly that she must go over in her excitement.

Out on the other side, he whistled. The mare flung up her head and listened tragically.

Then, as if she sensed something beyond her fear, she backed carefully up the dangerous way, step by step.

Long after he had disappeared toward the eastern side of the island he could hear her wildly calling from the hidden heights.

His fire was all but gone, but he rolled the few coals in their ashes and wrapped them in the long, broad leaves of the tree that bore the edible fruit, made a pack for his shoulders of the precious tins, more safely covered the rest, and made it back to the boulder. Here he used his wits in the bringing of his provisions through, going first himself and pulling them after by means of a rope tied to his waist. But on his first appearance he had the mare to deal with, for she was waiting tensely on the rim above.

Down she came, and he had to force her back with a strong hand upon her nose, following step by step himself. Once on the level she stepped about him like a crazy thing, whinnying in a low, hoarse manner that was all but human in its relief and unspeakable joy. It was as if she had loved and lost and received back again from the mystery of oblivion, and her heart was overcharged with gladness.

And presently, by the face of the eastern wall where the wind caves gaped, there rose in the evening air the gladsome comfort of a plume of smoke—though he found the coals were dead, after all, and had to use one of the few and precious matches—and his blanket was spread on the dry earth, his tins set down inside the cave, and he was at home.

Ah—home! He had dreamed of a home once—long, long back, it seemed—on the hills of Frisco Town, where the ships moved out through the Golden Gate and wealth and pleasure ruled in the happy city. Ah—home!

He laid his face on the brown mare's neck, and almost the unmanly tears came to his eyes.

"Castaways, both!" he said. "And I am a coward to flinch at my destiny! I won't, sweetheart. I'll be as brave as you, at least."

¶

AND thus it was that a new life came to the chestnut mare in the hidden country—a wondrous new life, in all truth—and the lost man from the *Lady Gay* found companionship and love, for such a love sprang up between the two as could not have happened under any other circumstances. Day by golden day they idled in their paradise, drank of the sweet waters and drowsed beneath the trees.

Nights the man lay on his blanket and

the mare lay down at the cave's mouth or tried to squeeze in at the entrance.

She seemed obsessed with a biting fear of loss and separation that held her near at all times.

And they went exploring, too. There were many caves in the wall of the escarpment, worn by the wind at some season of the year, broken from the parent rock by centuries of erosion; and it was deep in one of these that he found one day all the history of the lonely island and the chestnut mare he was ever to know—two human skeletons, not so long there, perhaps two years or three, their arms locked in what he took at first to be a close embrace.

It was indeed an embrace, close and tight, but not of love or sympathy, for the bones were those of two men, and in the bent hand of one there lay a knife—a knife whose long and rusted blade was still deep between the staring ribs of the other!

In the cave behind there was evidence of camp, the ancient ashes of fires between their stones, rotted blankets, and a candle in a bottleneck. And there was treasure, too: ship's plate, with the name of a princely boat, lost with all hands, as the world supposed, some seven years before, and women's stone-set rings and necklaces, such as the wealthy ones of the continents carry when they travel. These things lay scattered on the rocky floor, as if a struggle had thrown them there from the open box that lay end-up toward the farther wall. It was dim in the cave, and the man stared with wide eyes, reading the dusty tragedy.

When he came out and found Quicksilver waiting at the cave's mouth, he stood and gazed at her in puzzled abstraction.

"They must have brought you here, my beauty," he said, "but how or why will ever be a mystery. I wish you could speak the King's English."

But, if she could not speak, the brown beauty could learn a thousand things—to trot and to walk at the master's command, to whirl and stand erect on her hind feet, to kneel and to lie flat.

And after a while they were happy, both, in a way, for though Quicksilver had been wild with joy over the man's advent from the first, he had had a deal to conquer and cast out—hope, for one thing, and Helen's face with its wondrous blue eyes.

But he did cast them out of the future. So he slept, and played his endless games with Quicksilver the beautiful, walked the tableland from edge to edge and studied the speckless sea for hours. And the months rolled round, with the everlasting sun and the little winds, and the seasons changed a trifle. The rains came on, those blistering tropical rains, and the man became miserable with a plague of sores, so that he lay for days in the shelter of the caves, and the mare stamped at the entrance or stood patiently inside.

He became expert with his rocks among the sea-gulls; but the birds became wild with the slaughter among them, so that he must needs be expert indeed to get enough to eke out his failing resources—for the edible fruit trees had ceased to bear, and the tins from the *Lady Gay* could not last for ever.

This he knew in a dim way, putting it from him.

But, just the same, he began to play a new game with Quicksilver.

Where the tableland went north to the sharp rim of the precipice, there lay the most ideal reach of land in all the world on which to race a running horse. And the mare could run, swiftly and strongly. Day after day the man rode on her shining back all round and round the two-miles-by-three that comprised the hidden country of the island's top. The little winds blew his long hair back from his thin face, and his rags fluttered at his knees and elbows, and he looked wild as the first man, there on his chestnut friend, the horse. And he began, as I say, this new game.

Back from the rim's north edge a way he drew a line in the soft earth, a sharp line that could be easily seen, and up to this he would ride Quicksilver, steady her to dead stop—then, with a hand on her shoulder, send her leaping forward straight toward the edge. It was the point of the game to see how near she would go before the cat-like whirl and leap that took her sidewise and to safety. At first she would stop far back, as if afraid now that she carried such precious freight—she who had run to the thin, knife-blade edge to answer his call below and stopped with her hoofs beating the rim-rock! And the man would urge her nearer—nearer—just one more leap. For many weeks they played this trick, day after day, and the man beside his fire at the cave's mouth had long thoughts indeed.

Quicksilver became an expert, too. She could run straight toward the rim like a shot, and turn on a dime to safety. It was

exciting, because it carried an element of danger. Suppose—just suppose—that the rim should give way some day—or the sure little feet should make a mis-step.

It would be a spectacular thing, there in the sparkling sunlight above the open sea. The man visioned it, sometimes with a frown—but he came back to it in mind and looked at the picture again. . . . Quicksilver—the beautiful—hurtling out—all four feet spread-eagling beneath her in her fright—her glorious mane standing up like a cloud from her desperately arching neck as she sailed down the face of the cliff to the surging depths below. . . . *Some* picture—with only the screaming gulls for audience and the magnificent solitude for stage.

But he tried to put the picture from him—and stopped the game at last—only to begin it again when the monotony became unbearable.

The mare by this time could whirl on the direct edge, and always they started from the line. It was eighteen full leaps from the start to the last ultimate jump. Time after time the man had counted them. At first the mare had stopped as far back as ten, then had made it twelve, then fifteen, and so on to the brink.

There was no deeper thrill to be got from distance, so he began to make it up on speed. Like a shot the shining creature would shoot down the short track, her neat hoofs drumming. The whirl at the edge was always a tax on the man's horsemanship, but he was ever ready, lithe and strong and quick.

The rains were all but done, the sunlight periods longer, when something happened which seemed to write " the end " to the story for the man.

This was the storm—the great storm—like the one which did for the *Lady Gay* and which penned the man in his cave, cowering and fearing the whole spine of the island would crumble into the turmoil of the raging sea. Quicksilver trembled near him in the dark, and they were both afraid, poor atoms in the awesome wastes.

Three days later he went down the trail behind the hanging rock—to stand and view the cave where he had cached his stores, or what had been the cave. It was a cove now, merely a new angle of the shore line, and there were no stores.

There was nothing.

Like a very old man he dragged himself up to the hidden country, and not even the mare's soft whinny of joy at his coming could lighten the gravity of his speaking face.

" About a week, sweetheart," he said judicially ; " perhaps two if I can make the gulls eke out that time with the one-half tin of biscuit. Then—a long good-bye to you ; and some more years, when you will trot the tableland and look for something moving in the loneliness—will call and get no answer. It's a toss up which—would be best. I'd stay if I could, old girl, you know that," he finished with a touch of his old-time whimsy ; " but it just isn't possible."

In the days that followed he was with her every minute.

A deep regret for her was in his heart.

He thought of the days to come when she would run the ridge from end to end, and, standing on the rim, would look below with her eager eyes, would cry her ringing call and, tossing up her head, listen in painful silence for the whistle that never came. That picture cut to his heart, and his tender hands upon her neck became more tender still. It seemed as if the mare sensed something different in him, caught the shadow of tragedy that was drifting across the future, for her soft dark eyes became strained with the tensity of eagerness that could not quite pierce the veil between them.

¶

ONE week passed, and the man was very hungry. He tried hard for the gulls, but the birds were wise and careful. The precious biscuit was done. He searched the island for edible roots, but those he ate made him sick, and he was more miserable still.

And then at last came the glorious evening of gold and purple, of sweet winds and the scent of the southern sea, when he sat down beside his fire and had it out with himself.

" It's only a drawing out," he said aloud, " a thinning and a weakening of my will, my spirit and my courage. The weaker I am physically, the poorer will be my exit from this mundane sphere—and I abhor the poor, the weak. No. I have always tried to be and do the best, the strongest, the straightest. I decide for myself. To-morrow I make my last bow. The north cliff for mine—and a clean drop to the depths below. . . . But you, sweetheart " —he reached a pitying hand to the mare's nose—" what shall I decide for you ? The

spectacular drop with me—for you love me, that I know—or the aching loneliness of the empty years? Which would be best? Years—years—to die at last with none to ease your going with voice and hand, the most forsaken thing in all the peopled earth?"

Long he sat and studied, frowning into the fire.

At last he shook his head and rose. He struck his palm on the mare's satin shoulder with a gesture of finality.

"I have chosen," he said.

With which cryptic word he laid him down and slept in peace—but the brown mare paced the island all the night, her silver mane shining under the tropical moon, absent for once from his cave's door.

What called her to scan the empty sea as if with a last desperate hope for the man creature that was her god?

Who knows?

At dawn she was waiting for him.

There was nothing to do this day, since there was nothing to eat. For three days he had not been able to get near the birds.

Now he did not care.

The sun was coming out of the sea, a golden ball, wondrous and amazing. He watched it race up the cloudless heavens in that first seemingly swift ascent. Then he laved himself perfectly in the deep spring beneath the trees. He made himself neat as possible in his rags, and set fresh fuel to his fire.

"You'll be burning when we go," he said; "the altar fire for us."

Then he rubbed the mare until her silken coat shone in circles, and started for the northern end of the island, she trotting at his shoulder.

At the lip of the promontory he stood with folded arms and gazed for a long time to where he knew Frisco Town lay down behind the rim of the world—Frisco Town and Helen. In his heart he gave them farewell and made his peace above. Then he turned and led Quicksilver swiftly to the line. From his rags he tore a strip and securely bound her eyes, those pretty eyes that were so full of love and light. He laid his face on hers and kissed her satin cheek.

"Sweetheart," he said, "I take you with me—magnificently! There is no good-bye for us."

Then he swung across her back, settled himself for the last great dash of the game they had played.

At first the mare trembled and stood hesitant. She did not understand this darkness. But the master's hand was on her neck, ready to give the familiar starting touch; she felt his knees grip her shoulders. She steadied, drew herself taut as a well-trained horse should do. It was dark—but the master was signalling "ready." Therefore she *was* ready. She gathered her shining hoofs—waited, held her graceful head stretched a trifle forward, took a deep breath——

And the man said:

"*Go!* Sweetheart! *Go!*"

Instantly she went, with a dropping of loins, a lift and heave of withers, a drumming of fleet hoofs—went like a shot toward the distant rim, in darkness, not understanding, but obedient to the last.

The man flung up a hand, leaned forward, rode with wide eyes and the last flare of his courageous spirit in the smile that played on his lips—straight toward the blue gulf of space!

One—two—three . . . seven—eight—nine—the beating hoofs told off the distance——

Twelve—thirteen—fourteen—— The man's dark eyes were black as night with the spread pupils. The rim was coming swiftly down toward him. . . . He touched the mare's neck once more, and the note of her speed lifted. Fifteen—sixteen—seventeen—— He closed his eyes and clutched the silver mane with strong hands—and the next second, leaning for the inevitable sail out and down the face of the wall, his body shot forward and feet swung out in a wide arc—for Quicksilver, true to her training and that mysterious instinct which warns the dumb of danger, whirled on the eighteenth leap and swung aside to safety, sure of foot and distance, obedient in the dark!

And in that one awful moment while he swung perilously above the surging depths, face down as his impetus whirled his body, the man's dazed eyes looked straight down upon a long, dark object speckled with dots of white that nosed the cliff below—a ship's long boat filled with white-clad sailors from the schooner that had lain all night off the eastern side of the island behind the tall escarpments!

It was the schooner sent to search for the ill-starred *Lady Gay* and those who might survive her.

Trembling, shaken, laughing like a lunatic, the man rolled far inland where the mare's

sharp whirl had swung him. Then he tore the rag from her faithful eyes and, crawling to the rim, he drew her with him to peer in wonderment at the thing below.

Then he put his fingers to his ashen lips and blew such a whistle as seemed to him must reach the ears of Helen in that far city on the world's lip—and Quicksilver, leaning above him, stretched her shining neck and added her ringing peal.

Those in the boat looked up—waved glad hands—and when he had signed them to the south and the easy beach the man stood weakly up and, putting his arms about the mare's throat, wept unashamed into the cloud of her mane.

"Men—and—bars—and the stone prised out, sweetheart," he gasped between his tears and laughter; "and both of us—down—at last—to sail in through the Golden Gate and prance the streets of Frisco Town—the gayest two on earth!"

Sense and Sentiment

SENSE, shortness, and salt are the ingredients of a good proverb. HOWELL.

TAKE care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves. C. L. DODGSON.

SENTIMENT is intellectualised emotion; emotion precipitated, as it were, in pretty crystals by the fancy. LOWELL.

IT is hard to talk sense, but harder to find listeners if you do. C. H. SPURGEON.

SENTIMENT is the ripened fruit of fantasy. MME. DELAZY.

A' COMPLAIN o' want o' siller; nane o' want o' sense. SCOTTISH PROVERB.

THE barrenest of all mortals is the sentimentalist. CARLYLE.

THE mind is always the dupe of the heart. LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

THE heart has reasons of which reason has no knowledge. PASCAL.

I NEVER was a good son or a good brother or a good patriot, in the sense of thinking that my mother and my sister and my native country were better than other people's, because I happened to belong to them. G. B. SHAW.

THERE is sentiment in all women, and sentiment gives delicacy to thought, and tact to manner. But sentiment with men is generally acquired, an offspring of the intellectual quality, not, as with the other sex, of the moral. BULWER LYTTON.

IT is ever impossible to express a sentiment which we do not feel; the mind grimaces, and the style, too. LAMENNAIS.

The Farmers' Money

"When gold speaks—"

By E. WALTER HÜLPHERS

(*Specially translated for* THE ARGOSY *by Mrs. E. Gee Nash*)

E. Walter Hülphers is well-known to his Swedish countrymen as an interpreter of Scandinavian folk-lore. Formerly a journalist he took a prominent part, with the Swedish volunteers, in opposing the rebellion of 1918. His work has a directness and simplicity which goes straight to the heart, and I am confident that my readers will enjoy this grimly true little masterpiece.—*Ed.*

POST-ANNA ran along the path through the forest in order to reach the village quickly. She ran up hill and down, fast at first, then more slowly as her legs tired with wading through the knee-deep drifts . . . for no one had been along that path before her. Snow fell thick, and it grew dark, till it was harder than ever to get along. God help poor old folk alone in the forest in wild weather!

The post-bag jerked and knocked against her back, the old bag that she had carried so many times in hail and shine, over the mountain path between the village and the post-town. A poor old woman can't pick and choose when her man lies in the churchyard and there are four young children at home, all as hungry as crows, and for ever asking for bread. It's hard at times, but one has great joy in the children when they grow up and can fend for themselves.

The driving flakes cut her red, wrinkled old face; they melted and ran down her black kerchief, which was soon soaking wet and clinging to her head, while her cape was white with icicles . . . O, it had been white many a time, in many a wild storm, but it had never been in quite such an adventure as this!

The wind howled and moaned through the forest; the ice-covered firs cracked, while snow slid from their laden branches; and all the while darkness fell, thicker and thicker.

Now it behoved one to have good strong legs, for it was a matter of life or death to the children away there in the little cabin.

They would be all right now; Lill-Anna was such a good lass, and looked after the small ones. They'd be sitting round the stove, and she would be telling them stories; but later on they'd be both hungry and sleepy. . . . Well, mother would soon be home once she was over Bläberget.

But Bläberget was both high and steep. The path was snowed over, and she often slipped from it, and then she sank into such deep drifts that it took her some time to work her way out again, and all the while the darkness grew thicker and thicker.

The post-bag hung heavy over her shoulder. . . . Ah, the farmers got a good return for the timber they cut down! Think, such a lot of money! If only it were hers . . . if it were her very own money that she was carrying! Then she wouldn't need to tramp three miles to and fro every day, storm or shine. Then she would be able to mend the cabin so that the snow wouldn't drift in through the cracks. Then she would be able to buy new sheep-skins for the children. Lill-Anna, who was the eldest, had to be content with the least, and she often had a hard time, poor thing! Still . . . one might well be glad for the little ones one had . . . but . . .

Now the full force of the storm struck her, howling like a wolf. She had reached the top of the ridge where there were no trees, and where the wind had everything its own way. In some places the rocks lay bare for the snow had not been able to settle, but in places where there was a little shelter drifts were feet deep.

She turned her back to the wind while she got her breath. O, how tired she was . . . how terribly tired! It was so hot, despite the storm.

If only she could sit down and rest for a little; but she dare not. It was already almost dark, and they would be waiting for her down in the village: the farmers

for their money and the children for their old mother and their food.

So she turned round again and began to fight her way slowly through the snow, her back bent almost double.

But the storm was raging with redoubled force: it howled, shrieked, yelled and whistled; it tore at her frozen cape. The needle sharp flakes penetrated till she was chilled to the very marrow.

Once more she turned her back to the wind . . . the post-bag was heavier than ever . . . there must be a lot of money in it . . . a lot of money for the farmers! By now the children would be crying and the farmers getting anxious about their gold . . .

God help those who are old and poor, with a husband in the churchyard and four hungry children!

No one knows how long she stood there, staring out into the driving snow till black spots danced before her eyes and a high drift formed about her.

Then the blood rushed up to her head, wave after wave, sweat mingled with the melted snow on her face, and she sank to the ground.

The children . . . Lill-Anna would see after them while Mother rested a little, she was such a good lass . . . if only she remembered to fetch the drop of milk . . . while Mother rested for a little . . . only for a little. . . .

The farmers should have their money—the farmers who cut down the forest! Ah, how glorious it was to rest! The drift grew till it almost covered her. She scarcely felt the snow any more, she was warm and comfortable . . . she only wanted to sleep . . . just for a little.

The storm raged and the snow spread like a protecting cover over the poor old woman and her post-bag, round Post-Anna and the farmers' money! Flake after flake fell, and the drift grew. Soon all would be white, even the black kerchief lying, soaked and dripping, round her head.

Lill-Anna . . . the children . . .

She tried to raise herself, but fell heavily back.

The farmers' money . . . if they did not get their money! She gave a cry, so piercing that not even the storm could drown it; it reached far down into the valley, and a dog howled.

Post-Anna shouted again and again . . . then again, for her life and for her little children. But who was to hear her? All the folk were gathered round the fires where the porridge simmered.

Again she shouted . . . for the sake of the farmers' money!

What was that? Did she hear a shout from close at hand?

Yes, it was no delusion! It was Jon Er's man who had come out on skis to meet her. Think . . . the very richest farmer in the valley had sent to meet her! Think . . . what kindness! To remember a poor old woman, with her husband in the churchyard, and four hungry children, and a cabin that let in the snow! Think . . . what kindness, and in such wild weather!

He rubbed the old woman's frozen fingers and gave her a drink of brandy from his flask, and he took the heavy post-bag.

The old woman revived, and bound on the skis he had brought for her.

Now it was easier going! Now she would soon be at home with the children. Now there was no more danger!

But was it not God's own luck that she had been carrying the farmers' money that night when the storm raged over Bläberget like a hungry wolf?

THE ARGOSY VOTING COMPETITION

WE offer two prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the readers who send in the titles of the four best stories which most nearly coincide with the votes of the majority when the ballot is taken. Stories must be selected from this issue.

Entries should be made on post-cards addressed to: "Vote," THE ARGOSY, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, E.C.4, and sent in by May 27, 1927.

The result will be announced in THE ARGOSY for August, on sale July 7.

The Sweets of Solitude

Upon a Hill-Top.

I WAS utterly alone with the sun and the earth. Lying down on the grass, I spoke in my soul to the earth, the sun, the air, and the distant sea far beyond sight. I thought of the earth's firmness—I felt it bear me up; through the grassy couch there came an influence as if I could feel the great earth speaking to me. I thought of the wandering air—its pureness, which is its beauty; the air touched me and gave me something of itself. I spoke to the sea: though so far, in my mind I saw it, green at the rim of the earth and blue in deeper ocean; I desired to have its strength, its mystery and glory. Then I addressed the sun, desiring the soul-equivalent of his light and brilliance, his endurance and unwearied race. I turned to the blue heaven over, gazing into its depth, inhaling its exquisite colour and sweetness. The rich blue of the unattainable flower of the sky drew my soul towards it, and there it rested, for pure colour is rest of heart. By all these I prayed; I felt an emotion of the soul beyond all definition; prayer is a puny thing to it. and the word is a rude sign to the feeling, but I know no other. Richard Jefferies.

THE stag that lifted up his kingly head
Upon the silent mountains, and from far
Beneath him heard the confident, harsh cry
Of men invading his old solitudes,
Then bounding over the rough slopes has climbed
By dancing brooks, remoter ranges, thick
With forests moaning in the cloudy winds
Of desolate November, nor has stayed
Till on the utmost craggy ledge, among
Wet boughs, with antlers dripping from the mist
And with sweat-darkened, quivering coat he snuffs,
Wide-nostrilled, the wild air, where motionless
He stands at last; what shudder as of joy
Deeply to breathe that native loneliness
Possesses him! Laurence Binyon.

Where Fruits May Ripen.

DEPART from the highway, and transplant thyself in some enclosed ground; for it is hard for a tree that stands by the wayside to keep her fruit till it be ripe. St. Chrysostom.

A Tranquil and Modest Life.

THE wise man will, above all, strive after freedom from pain and annoyance, quiet and leisure, consequently a tranquil, modest life, with as few encounters as may be, and so, after a little experience of his so-called fellow-men, he will elect to live in retirement, or even, if he be a man of great intellect, in solitude. For the more a man has in himself, the less he will want from other people—the less, indeed, other people can be to him. This is why a high degree of intellect tends to make a man unsocial. Arthur Schopenhauer.

Never Less Alone Than When Alone.

HE who comes into assemblies only to gratify his curiosity, and not to make a figure, enjoys the pleasures of retirement in a more exquisite degree than he possibly could in his closet; the lover, the ambitious, and the miser, are followed thither by a worse crowd than any they can withdraw from. To be exempt from the passions with which others are tormented, is the only pleasing solitude. I can very justly say with the ancient sage, "I am never less alone than when alone" . . . I have the high satisfaction of beholding all nature with an unprejudiced eye; and having nothing to do with men's passions or interests, I can, with the greater sagacity, consider their talents, manners, failings and merits. Sir Richard Steele.

I HAVE learned, at length, that the soul grows wiser by retirement.
Sir Henry Wotton.

AMID the throng
Which, restless, moves along
With hurrying footsteps o'er the earth,
But few their noblest thoughts have known:
Seldom save when alone
Come thoughts of worth.

It needs the balm
Of soul-restoring calm
To purge the mind of Life's alloy;
Thus yielding back Man's highest power,
His blessèd pristine dower
Of peace and joy.

And thus do men,
With new and eager ken,
Taste those rich joys that only live
In solitude—joys which uplift
Their souls to truth—best gift
That Life can give. Mackenzie Bell.

A Difficult Choice.

FROM the earliest time I can remember, I preferred the pleasure of being alone to wishing for visitors, and have often taken a bannock and a bit of cheese to the wood or hill, to avoid dining with company. As I grew from boyhood to manhood, I saw this would not do; and that to gain a place in men's esteem, I must mix and bustle with them. Pride and exaltation of spirits often supplied the real pleasure which others seem to feel in society; yet mine certainly upon many occasions was real. Still, if the question was—eternal company, without the power of returning within yourself, or solitary confinement for life, I should say, "Turnkey, lock the cell!" Sir Walter Scott.

The End in View.

IT had been hard to have put more truth and untruth together, in few words, than in that speech, "Whosoever is delighted with solitude, is either a wild beast or a god": for it is most true that a natural and secret hatred and aversion towards society, in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast; but it is most untrue that it should have any character at all of the divine nature, except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation. Francis Bacon.

Ruling Spirit Strong in Retirement.

EVERY one knows the story of the tallow-chandler who, having amassed a fortune, disposed of his business, and taken a house in the country, not far from London, that he might enjoy himself, after a few months' trial of a holiday life requested permission of his successor to come into town and assist him on melting days. I have heard of one who kept a retail spirit shop, and having in like manner retired from trade, used to employ himself by having one puncheon filled with water, and measuring it off by pints into another. I have heard, also, of a butcher in a small country town, who some little time after he had left off business, informed his old customers that he meant to kill a lamb once a week, just for his amusement. Robert Southey.

Exile Gladly Sought.

"NEVER less alone than when alone," is now become a very vulgar saying. Every man, and almost every boy, for these seventeen hundred years, has had it in his mouth. But it was first spoken by the excellent Scipio, who was without question a most eloquent and witty person, as well as the most wise, most worthy, most happy, and the greatest of all mankind. His meaning, no doubt, was this, that he found more satisfaction to his mind, and more improvement of it, by solitude than by company; and, to show that he spoke this not loosely, or out of vanity, after he had made Rome mistress of almost the whole world, he retired himself from it by a voluntary exile, and at a private house in the middle of the wood near Linternum, passed the remainder of his glorious life no less gloriously. Abraham Cowley.

SOLITUDE is sometimes best society,
And short Retirement urges sweet return.
John Milton.

Alone in a Country Church.

WOULDST thou know the beauty of holiness?—Go alone on some week-day, borrowing the key of good Master Sexton, traverse the cool aisles of some country church: think of the piety that has kneeled there—the congregations, old and young, that have found consolation there—the meek pastor—the docile parishioner. With no disturbing emotions, no cross conflicting comparisons, drink in the tranquillity of the place, till thou thyself become as fixed and motionless as the marble effigies that kneel and weep around thee.
Charles Lamb.

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My Ward

A delicate situation and a diplomatic adjustment

By WALTER E. GROGAN

I REGARDED Miss Marsham with interest—with that particular kind of interest born of disappointment. She was so typically a governess that she seemed unreal. Hair of no colour or any colour, gold-rimmed pince-nez, a large face that was learned without being intellectual. She looked the governess age—either young-old or old-young: something unnatural and repressive. She had an assured manner. She wore serviceable clothes. She seemed to be as much at home in my house in five minutes as she ever would be anywhere. And she was exactly, from her small felt hat with a feather that was frankly barndoor fowl to her squarish-toed boots, what I might have expected Martha would have sent me. I rather regretted that I had applied to Martha. But then with ten children, one presumed experience. And I was a bachelor.

"My sister explained everything to you, Miss Marsham?" I asked.

"Lady Westlake arranged terms, Colonel Brecon. Also the probable curriculum. She was good enough to leave the details to me. She was emphatic on the subject of hygiene——"

"I know!" I said, probably impatient. "Early rising in winter, cold baths, and a well-ventilated schoolroom, which means draughts and a dead fire! Ugh!" I had horrible recollections of shivering nephews and nieces the last long leave before a practical country retired me at my most useful age. The memory used to make me feel cold in India, even in the hottest weather.

"Lady Westlake gave me very few particulars—she could give me very little time." Martha is always in a hurry! "Beyond the facts that my pupil is your ward, and that she is seven, I know nothing."

"Jean is about seven," I said, adding, "By the way, she comes to-day. I am going to meet her. She is the daughter of an old comrade—Major Gauntlett. He—er—poor old chap—saved my life five months ago. In the Hills, you know. I was stunned by a stone. He came out for me under fire. Carried me back . . . . And was hit."

I turned to the window. Some beastly midge or something had got into my eye.

"He died the next day, Miss Marsham. I was with him. He asked me to look after his child. 'Look after little Jean,' he said. 'She's motherless, poor child—quite alone.' I promised. Strange thing is, I never knew that his wife was dead. He married eight years ago. Secretive chap. He was not in my regiment. I—er—really knew him very little. Always liked him, though."

"And you have adopted his child? It is very generous of you."

I thought her voice was a little acidly contemptuous.

"I promised," I said shortly.

"The presence of a child will be rather distracting to you, I fear. You might have looked after her in a way that a guardian does—seen that she was in good hands, placed her with reliable people. There are many such. My mother, for instance—"

"It would be shirking my duty," I replied. "I don't mean to look after poor Gauntlett's kid vicariously. By Jove, here's the brougham! Mrs. Burgess, my housekeeper, will show you your room, Miss Marsham. Please ring."

I confess I felt nervous. I am fond of children, but I had had little experience of them. Although my sister had so many, my visits to Westlake House were always brief. Martha is a managing woman. I prefer to muddle in my own way. There were seven or eight dolls, two dolls' houses, and a rocking-horse in the room I had chosen as a nursery. I tried to build up confidence upon them. But as I neared the station I began to have serious misgivings as to the rocking-horse. Was a rocking-horse a proper present for a little

girl? Would it tend to mould her into a tomboy? Battledore and shuttlecock would have been more seemly, perhaps. But then that necessitated two players at least. And I could not imagine Miss Marsham battledoring!

I brought the bays up smartly—they were a bit fresh—threw the reins to Gifford, and jumped down.

"Afternoon, Twells!" I cried to the station-master. "The 3-40 in good time?"

"Yes, sir; early to-day. Only twenty minutes behind schedule at Luff Junction."

"Good gad!" I cried; and lighted a cigar.

"It's good to see a carriage here from the Manor, Colonel," Twells said.

"Thank 'ee," I answered. The Manor had been vacant a year before I took possession. Before that I had let the place to some brewer, Bawn, who had been unpopular. They still remembered my father in the village, and he had been dead ten years. Little Borton was conservative and clannish, and liked the old name. Perhaps there was some consolation in being shelved so soon. I tried to think so. I tried to think so, indeed, so far as to purchase a volume on pig rearing. All my labourers appeared to be authorities on pigs. One felt so ignorant talking to them.

"Meeting a little girl, I hear," Twells continued, "Belike a niece?" Old Twells was familiar; always had been. My father liked him.

"No. A ward, Twells. She's going to live at the Manor. Her governess came to-day."

"*Her!* A governess! Poor little maidie! I'll tell the missus to get a glass of milk and a bun ready. *Her!* To governess a small child. Well, well! Poor mite!" He went off to the little cottage at the end of the platform.

¶

I HAD half-smoked my second cheroot when the train came in. A dozen or so alighted leisurely, and then commenced to hurry in the manner of railway travellers—but no child. I rushed to the end of the train and spoke to the guard. No—there had only been one child at the Junction. A girl? Yes. Where was she? She had got out at Baverton. Could the child have made a mistake? What more natural than that a child should make a mistake? My thoughts ran quickly. I saw a frightened child disconsolate upon a country platform; probably crying. Baverton was four miles away. For the first time I felt tolerant of motor-cars, and half sorry that I had been faithful to horseflesh.

"When is the next train from Baverton?" I demanded.

"In four hours," the guard of the local said heavily. "As near as possible," he added. It was terrible to contemplate. Four hours! A lifetime to an unhappy child. I would drive over at once. No, I would send a telegram first to the station-master.

"Why did you let her get out there, guard?" I asked angrily.

"She wanted to, sir," he said, with slow surprise.

"You ought to have brought her on here!" I declared.

"Whatever for, sir?" He seemed profoundly perplexed.

"She will be frightened left all alone, poor child!" I cried. "It's monstrous!"

"Oh, she weren't alone, sir! Mrs. Binns met her."

"Mrs. Binns! Who the deuce is Mrs. Binns?"

"Her grandmother, sir. Effie Binns was the only child in the train, sir."

The man was a fool, a crass, stupid fool! I commenced to tell him so, and he signalled the driver to start.

"'Ow was I to know as you wanted Effie Binns brought on 'ere, sir?" he demanded, standing on the van step. He still looked very perplexed.

I stalked up the platform to look for Twells. Near the booking-office I met a young girl dressed in black. She was tall, slender, and—I am a poor judge of the age of a woman—about twenty years old. She placed herself in my path to my great surprise. She was self-possessed, but her eyes held rather a pathetically imploring light.

"Colonel Julius Brecon?" she said. I liked her voice. It was frank.

"That is my name," I answered. Can I do anything for you?" I had a vague idea that she wished to see me in my magisterial capacity. "I shall be at liberty in a few minutes. Just at present I am—looking for someone."

"Jean Gauntlett?"

"Ah!" I exclaimed, a light breaking in upon me. "You have come to tell me that she is unable to travel?"

"One would hardly make a journey of over a hundred miles to do that. Telegrams are decidedly cheaper. I am Jean Gauntlett."

"You!" I exclaimed. I was dumbfounded. I suppose I looked an ass. And at that moment Twells arrived with a mug of milk and a ridiculous plate of buns.

"Have you found the little girl, sir?" he cried.

"Yes, Twells," I said after a struggle. "This is the little girl." Then I laughed. I could not help it. I laughed as I had not laughed since I left the mess for good and all. Old Twells' face and the dawning look of consternation in Jean's eyes finished me. I knew she was harbouring suspicions of my sanity. And when I thought of the rocking-horse waiting gravely at home in all the pomp of its preposterously dappled state, I grew convulsive and purple.

"You are not well, Colonel Brecon," she said anxiously. "A little water? Or this." She seized the mug. For a moment I thought she was going to pour its contents over me. Afterwards she confessed that she had thought that I was seized with some terrible kind of fit. Her action sobered me.

"I am glad to welcome you, Jean," I cried, controlling my voice. "We shan't want the milk and buns, Twells, after all. Thank Mrs. Twells, though. Miss Gauntlett has grown enormously—in the last few minutes." I led the way out, followed reluctantly by Jean. My cart had arrived, and I gave the second groom instructions about her luggage. There was very little of it.

¶

PRESENTLY we were bowling home, Jean by my side, Gifford behind. And Jean told me how it was.

She was Dick Gauntlett's only child by his first wife. He had married again eight years ago—hence my error, for I had not known that he was a widower—a cold, selfish woman of the world, who had some means. There were two girls of the second marriage. Mrs. Gauntlett, it seemed, had been very relieved at my proposal of taking charge of Jean. Poor Dick left only the service pensions—Mrs. Gauntlett had not been very delicate in referring to Jean's poverty.

"She always hated me," Jean said. I saw that underlying her self-assurance was a settled sadness. "It was a relief to come away. I knew that nothing could be so bad as I was enduring there. And you were a V.C. man—like father?"

"He paid for that with his life," I said gravely. "And he saved mine."

We were both silent for awhile.

"I shall not be much trouble," she continued pathetically. "I am used to looking after myself and amusing myself in my own way."

"But I have a rocking-horse for you, and dolls! And, oh, by Jove, a governess, too!" And the laugh the idea of the toys provoked was suddenly nipped by a frosty recollection of Miss Marsham.

"Is she nice?" Jean asked, smiling at me.

"Horrid!" I answered emphatically.

"Then we'll get rid of her." She spoke with quiet decision. I smiled back with an assurance I did not feel. I rather thought an interview with Miss Marsham might prove unpleasant. It did. It is remarkable how invariably unpleasant forebodings are fulfilled.

I sent for her, and interviewed her in the library. Somehow an array of books one never reads lends one a certain strength. Miss Marsham regarded me frostily.

"You sent for me, Colonel Brecon," she said. "I presume to make the acquaintance of my pupil. I was not asked to meet her at tea." She seated herself severely, and folded her hands. I loathe people who fold their hands. It is an outward and visible sign of an inward state of priggishness.

"Er—you see, Miss Marsham, Jean is yet a little strange to her surroundings. I thought she would rather be with someone she knew—just at first."

"She can hardly know you much better than she does me, Colonel Brecon."

"Oh, by Jove, she does! We get on famously."

"I fear you bribe her."

"Bribe her? What on earth d'you mean, Miss Marsham."

"With sweets. Bachelors invariably do."

I smothered a laugh.

"I assure you she is not keen on sweets."

"Indeed. She is a strange child—or she prevaricates."

"She's strange. She is the strangest child I've ever met. I give you my word, Miss Marsham, I was bowled over when I met her."

A curious gleam came into her eyes, and she leant forward a little and spoke with portentous solemnity.

"Not mentally afflicted, Colonel Brecon? I hope not. But I have had considerable experience with backward, mentally defective pupils."

"No, not at all," I interposed hastily. "I hope Mrs. Burgess made you comfortable?"

She pressed her lips together and looked down at her folded hands.

"I do not wish to mark my first day in your house, Colonel Brecon, by making complaints. I will say nothing."

"And be more than eloquent, Miss Marsham!" I cried. I saw my way out. "You are not comfortable. I release you from your engagement."

"You mistake me——"

"Ah no. I see how it is. Indeed, I am contrite for the sins of Mrs. Burgess. I cannot permit you to be subject to discomfort. I will send a month's cheque."

"No, no," She folded her hands abruptly. "I can take care of myself." I had no doubt of that. "There is my duty to my pupil."

"She won't mind, Miss Marsham. Perhaps I had better write the cheque now." I opened a drawer in my writing-table.

"One would hardly consult a child on such a matter. I also feel, Colonel Brecon, a sense of obligation to Lady Westlake. I must insist upon remaining."

I felt that I was becoming mesmerised by her insistence. In her voice I caught an echo of my sister Martha, before whom I always felt invertebrate. I took my courage into both hands.

"I—er—it is exceedingly strange, Miss Marsham, but—er—it really appears that—well, to be frank, your services are useless. Jean has finished her education."

"At seven?" I knew she was looking at me, but I fixed my attention upon a very commonplace example of the laurustinus outside the window.

"She is—er—more than seven."

"Indeed!"

"A first marriage—these things happen—I wasn't present. I mean I was not aware—Jean is twenty."

"Indeed!"

"Quite a nice girl. I—I am rather glad."

"Indeed!"

"It relieves me of much responsibility."

"Has she gone?"

"Who? Jean? Of course not! She is my ward."

"Indeed! Does her chaperone remain?"

"She—she—er—didn't bring one."

"Then Lady Westlake is coming?" Her tones were more acutely acid than before.

"Heaven for—I mean, my sister has her own home duties. She will not be able to come west yet awhile." I felt cheerier for remembering that.

"But you hardly propose that this young lady should remain alone in your house with you, Colonel Brecon?"

"I do," I said, I hope stoutly.

"Indeed!"

"An old man, her guardian," I murmured.

"You are not old, Colonel Brecon," she replied. I think it hurt her that force of insinuation necessitated the semblance of a compliment.

"I'm nearly fifty," I replied shortly. "Besides, there is Mrs. Burgess."

"A servant!"

"A friend, Miss Marsham. She was my mother's confidential maid."

"I could remain as companion to Miss Gauntlett."

"I thought of that," I explained. "But Jean did not care for a companion."

"Indeed!" She rose very stiffly. "I may have some vehicle to take me to the station, I presume, Colonel Brecon?"

"Oh, I do not mean to turn you out so unceremoniously, Miss Marsham!" I cried. "To-morrow!"

"I should prefer not to remain," she said. I met her gaze. Her stare was glacial. "Will you write a cheque now?" I did so feeling very much like a guilty schoolboy. She accepted it in silence, and withdrew.

It was preposterous! Jean was my ward. And there was Mrs. Burgess. And for all the Mesdames Grundy who ever lived I would not have a woman filled with the glacial acid human unkindness as the companion of so fresh and innocent a young girl as Jean. I was an old—well, comparatively old, shall I say middle-aged?—man. And Jean was a child. Besides, I was a confirmed bachelor.

¶

WE had an excellent dinner in the back parlour—a little nondescript room panelled and furnished in black oak. The

dining-room was impossible for two. At least, I always preferred the parlour.

"Do you play cribbage or backgammon, Guardy?" Jean, asked, towards the close of the meal.

"Good gad, no, Jean! Why should I?" She looked a little crestfallen.

"Chess?" she suggested hopefully, after a moment. "Or Patience?"

"No, no! What are you driving at?"

"My grandfather used to play them all. Of course, you are not quite so old as he was, but I thought—I want to amuse you in the evenings." She smiled at me innocently. Her grandfather! Good gad!

"No, I'm not so old," I said shortly. "I'll teach you billiards instead. I suppose you don't play?"

"Oh, no. I'm not good at games."—Billiards a game!—"You see, Guardy, mother—my second mother—didn't like me to waste my time."

"D'you mean to say she made you work? Whatever did you do?"

"At first, I looked after the two children when I wasn't at school. Mother—my second mother—went out a great deal. Afterwards I taught them."

"Were they nice children, Jean?"

"Little beasts! Oh, don't let us think about them! I used to have a holiday with grandfather; but he died. I have no near relations now!"

"Poor lonely little mortal!" I said. It sounded horribly pathetic. "But those days are over, thank heaven!"

"I shall never be able to thank you enough, Guardy—never, never!" she said. I saw her wide-open blue eyes fill with tears. It made me feel a little choky.

I gave her her first lesson in billiards that evening. She was very anxious to learn, but it was a little tiring to me.

The next morning I told her of my work, "The Evolution of the Principles of Government in the Native States of Central India." I had a mass of material—two packing cases full of note-books, rough memoranda, copies of documents in native archives, and that sort of thing. Jean volunteered to help. Her eyes betrayed how eager she was. I pooh-poohed the idea at first, but she looked so thoroughly hurt that I gave in. I had misgivings, though. Their truth was amply demonstrated.

About twelve I heard Jack Herbon's voice in the hall. He was the son of Herbon, the O.C. of the 1st Wessex. Jack was on leave, staying with his grandmother, Lady Herbon, a valetudinarian. I went out to see him.

"Hallo, Colonel!" he cried. "I've got it!" He held in his arms a huge brown-paper parcel.

"Got what?"

"A ripping teddy-bear! He turns somersaults when you wind him up, and grunts in a most natural way!"

"Is it for me?"

"For you? Ha, ha! No, for the kid, Jean. She has come, hasn't she?"

"Oh, yes," I said gravely. "It's good of you to think of her. She will be greatly pleased. Come into the den and be introduced."

The den was the room specially devoted to work.

"Is she in there? Won't she disturb you? What?"

I threw open the door.

"This is the kid, Jean," I said. "My friend, Jack Herbon, has brought you a present."

Jean rose with a sigh of relief from her labour of hopelessly mixing my papers and inking her fingers. Jack stared and then suddenly became crimson from forehead to collar. He tried to shuffle the brown-paper package behind his back, and then discovered that he could not, then shook the slim black-and-white hand Jean extended.

"A present for *me?* That is awfully kind of you!" she said sweetly.

"Er—no—Miss—er—Gauntlett. That—that was the Colonel's joke. I—er—am taking back something for—er—my grandmother. A little present."

"What is it?" she asked.

"It is—er—a stuffed animal," he answered weakly. "I'll leave it in the hall, Colonel," he added, making a dive for the door. In his confusion he dropped the package, which proceeded, in a most mysterious manner, to turn over and over. And muffled by the brown paper, came a series of weird grunts and growls. Jean screamed. Jack, grown from crimson to a painful purple, furiously caught up the package, and I sat down suddenly in a chair in a helpless fit of laughter.

"It's alive!" Jean cried. "Be careful!"

"N-n-no. It's all right," Jack stammered and in his confusion broke the string with which the package was tied. The brown paper fell away and a teddy-bear appeared.

Jean stared at it in amazement.

"Your grandmother has funny tastes," she said very gravely.

"Lady Herbon!" I cried. "Nonsense! It was meant for you, Jean."

"I—er—didn't know you were so old," Jack said.

"Do I look very old?" Jean inquired, pouting.

"No—no. I don't mean it that way. I thought you were a child—and—er—children like teddy-bears. I always give my nephews and nieces, real and adopted, teddy-bears. Saves a lot of thinking."

"I see. And you saved yourself a lot of thinking over me."

"No. Well, I hadn't seen you then," Jack replied.

The work did not progress that morning.

We spent a beautiful week. I had thought that Jean might be a disturbing element. But she was painfully anxious to please, and Jack was a great help. He appeared to have taken a great fancy to *me*. I dare say he found it slow at Herbon Court, and was glad to talk to a man of my experience. I hinted to him the delicacy of feeling which forebade me to tell Jean outright that she was a hindrance to the work rather than a help.

"She is so confoundedly anxious, Jack," I said. "And when I hint she thinks I am thinking of her. And, selfish beggar that I am, I'm not."

"My dear Colonel!" he cried, "I'll take her off your hands! Tennis—she'll like that. Eh, what? You can make her believe that she is saving you from my interruption."

"Jack, you have the wisdom of a serpent! But I can't allow that. You're down for the fishing. I'm selfish—but I can't allow you to sacrifice yourself, Jack. No, no."

"But, Colonel, I'd be glad to do it. Honest Injun. The gov. thinks the world of you. And you're awfully decent to me. And I can stay to lunch. It's something to have a man to speak to. I take my meals in solemn solitary state at the Court."

The temptation was too great. I fell. Jack sacrificed himself nobly, and I had free unhampered mornings. The lunches were quite merry. Jean had really a happy disposition, and I was glad to notice her pathetically repressed manner drop away in the evenings Jack dined with us and played billiards with me afterwards. Jean marked. I invariably beat him playing level, and he was considered a good player. Jean was quite sorry for him.

Then came the bombshell.

Martha wired me: "I hear that the girl is with you. It is scandalous. Expect me to-morrow."

I wired Martha: "Sorry. House damp."

She replied: "After three weeks' drought? Nonsense. Tell Burgess to air the mattress."

9

I MET Martha with the bays in the late afternoon. Martha is nervous about horses. The bays were uncommonly fresh.

"Julius, let Gifford drive," she commanded. "My maid will go in the cart with the luggage. She is a fool, but I have given her a written list of the times. I trust they will all arrive. You will sit behind with me."

"Gifford's wrist *may* be strong enough," I said doubtfully. I suppose a condemned criminal will always seize at anything to postpone the final event.

"What!" Martha cried. The off bay just then tried to bite the near one's ear in play, and it was a full minute before they were reduced to quietness, "You will drive, Julius. I pray we reach the manor alive."

I managed to dodge Martha until dinner-time. She sailed into the drawing-room, where I awaited her with Jean, a majestic figure in black velvet.

"This is my ward, Jean, Martha; my sister, Lady Westlake, Jean," I said palliatively.

"I am so glad to meet Guardy's sister, Lady Westlake," Jean said expansively. I had not explained Martha to her. "He has been so good to me."

"I have no doubt," Martha replied grimly. She glared at me, taking no notice of Jean.

"My goodness," I exclaimed hurriedly, "consists in letting the child run about as she likes. I see very little of her."

"Oh, Guardy," Jean cried, "you know you waste an awful lot of time over me! He is ever so good, Lady Westlake."

"I like," Martha said, without moving her eyes, which were fixed upon me, "your choice of words. 'Waste' is excellent."

There was a horribly silent minute. Martha was the only one who seemed comfortable. She smiled at me. It made me feel very restless. I spoke about the

weather at last quite spiritedly. It did not sound convincing, though.

We had a long dinner. I never remember quite so long a dinner. Jack was not there. Unfortunately, his grandmother was better —I don't mean that exactly, but I had counted upon Jack, and wished to play cribbage. Jack sent a note. There was a line at the end: "Just heard that Lady Westlake is coming to you. Please remember me to her."

Martha quite ignored Jean. I tried to drag the child into the conversation, but she did not respond very well. She looked depressed. I thought that I detected pity in her eyes once when I caught her watching me.

At the close of dinner Martha rose, glacially unaware of Jean's presence.

"You can have your coffee and cigar in the library, Julius. I will accompany you." I followed. In passing out of the door, I caught Jean's glance. To my surprise there was fury in her eyes, only half veiled. I should have thought she would have been meeker than Martha. But then Jean was really ignorant of Martha's powers.

"Julius," Martha said, "this must end." I stood in front of the empty grate and stirred my coffee. It gives one a feeling of strength.

"You are not very lucid, Martha," I countered, elevating my eyebrows. "What must end?"

"This girl."

"You don't seriously propose poison, Martha?" I asked.

"Don't be a fool, Julius! When you try to be funny I know that you are merely seeking to mask a weak position. You have a young girl living alone with you."

"There are the servants."

"They don't count; you know that."

"There are my grey hairs. It's too absurd. I am years older than Jean. I am a respectable middle-aged guardian. You have your mind poisoned by the Gorgon of a salary-hunting governess!"

"No one is old enough to be immune from scandal, Julius. In your case no doubt they would revive the old proverb about an old fool——"

"I know it quite well, Martha," I said hastily. "You need not finish the quotation. And Jean?"

"Is she worth discussing? Really, Julius, you appear to fall an easy victim to anyone who is specious. I am sure I dread every morning's post. I dare say you hardly knew her father?"

"He saved my life," I said.

"But that was the natural outcome of his professional instinct," Martha asserted. "Surely a sum of money—not too large——"

"Suppose I adopted Jean?" I suggested. Martha bristled.

"That would be impossible. The scandal would be as great or greater. And I must add, Julius, that your attitude towards your own family is distinctly unnatural. If you have any wish for adoption, there are your nieces——"

"I have no desire for adoption as adoption," I interposed quickly, "but as a way out."

"The only way is to end the nauseous business. Such a scandal might seriously affect my girls' matrimonial prospects. You must promise me that you will end the affair."

So I promised. It was always easier to promise Martha what she wanted at first. If one stood out it came to the same thing in the end with unpleasant happenings by the way.

¶

MY night's rest was distinctly troubled. It really seemed that unconsciously I had damaged Jean's reputation. I had promised Martha to put an end to what she termed the scandal. And I had promised Dick Gauntlett to look after his girl. I could only see one solution that would fulfil both promises. I had uneasy night-marish dreams of execution, and the executioner's visage was uncommonly like that of Martha.

I rose in a chastened mood. I spent a mournful half-hour in the den. I had looked forward to many peaceful days there! The breakfast bacon was dried to a chip. Martha and Jean had horribly good appetites. They prolonged the meal in a most unfeeling manner. Neither of them spoke to the other. It was a deadly repast!

I found Jean in the conservatory an hour after breakfast. She was snipping dead leaves off the plants. Each snip had a vicious energy of its own. I imagined that she was thinking of Martha.

"Jean," I said, "will you marry me?"

She dropped her scissors with a clatter and stared at me. For some moments she did not speak. Then I saw a slow determination in her eyes.

"Yes, Guardy," she answered gravely, "I will."

"Oh," I said blankly. I felt that I ought to have done something more, but I could think of nothing. I kissed her, and she submitted with a sedate gravity very charming in its way. But I felt horribly depressed. "I suppose you ought to go away," I ventured at last.

"Unless Lady Westlake chaperones me."

"Oh, she won't," I assured her grimly. "You can go to Herbon Court. Lady Herbon will be delighted. And you will be near me," I added in a rush, trying to gather enthusiasm. Jean grew suddenly crimson, and then slowly paled until she had lost every vestige of colour. I had had no idea that she had grown to care so much. It made me feel hypocritical. I patted her cold little hand, which seemed rather idiotic.

"You have made me very happy," I said at length. My voice did not sound very convincing to me, but Jean smiled.

"I am very glad," she replied, in a low, tremulous voice. There were unshed tears in her eyes. And I had had no idea. How very deeply women hide the secrets of their hearts!

I drifted away. In the hall I met Martha. She beckoned me to follow her into the library.

"Is that girl going, Julius?" she demanded.

"Yes."

"Thank heaven! Then I can return to my home. Agatha"—the third of her girls—"has given me cause for some uneasiness lately. She is foolish enough to wish her own way." Martha's lips closed grimly. I felt sorry for Agatha.

"Jean will stay with Lady Herbon until I marry her," I said.

"Julius!" I did not look at Martha, but waited. Nothing further came. For once Martha was speechless. Suddenly she crossed to the fireplace and rang the bell. "I wash my hands of you!" she cried, in the grim tones of a pope excommunicating a renegade. She paced the room until Burgess entered. I think Burgess must have known the tone of the bell.

"Have me packed up, Burgess," Martha commanded. "I go home at once. Your master is mad—stark staring mad!" She swept out of the room.

I went for a long walk. I had some bread and cheese at a country inn some time after my usual luncheon hour. I arrived home very tired about four. I went into the blue drawing-room to look for Jean. She was neither there nor in the conservatory. The door of the latter stood open to the lawn. It was a very hot, oppressive day. I sat down to think in a big easy chair.

When I awoke I heard voices in the conservatory. With the blinds drawn the drawing-room was very dark. There were not only voices, but an occasional sob. The sobs came from Jean. Her companion was Jack Herbon, whose voice did not sound at all happy.

"We must forget, Jack," I heard Jean say in the semi-conscious lethargic mood that attends a slow awakening from a troubled sleep.

"That's impossible," Jack said. "You are sacrificing yourself. He's an old man." I wondered vaguely of whom he was speaking.

"He has been very good to me . . . I feel that it is my duty . . . Of course, he bores me. As a guardian I could have loved him, but——" She tried to check a sob with indifferent success. "One must be brave and face it."

"He may not live long," Jack said. "I have always thought old Brecon was failing." Good gad, they were talking of ME!

"We cannot hope for that," Jean said sadly. "People live so long nowadays. He—he is so helpless. I can be of great use to him in protecting him from that awful Lady Westlake. It is sad to see how he positively dotes on me."

"He ought to be thinking of his latter end—not of marriage!" Jack cried. Then I rose.

They started apart, and stood looking at me guiltily.

"I—I have been telling Jack our news," Jean said, with a smile. I suppose women are more used to subterfuge. They invariably recover their wits after an awkward contretemps more quickly than men. Jack was still stooping, smelling at a dead rose that Jean had neglected.

"Ah! And Jack was congratulating you," I replied affably.

"Er—I think you, sir—er—ought to be the one to be—er—congratulated."

" Thanks, Jack," I cried cheerfully. " I appreciate the warmth of your expressions. Your grandmother won't mind taking charge of Jean until—until later ? "

" Oh, no, sir ! I'm sorry I shall not be there to—er—help entertain Miss Gauntlett. Fact is—er—I rejoin to-morrow—got to start this evening."

" Going ? " said Jean. She gave him a little helpless look.

" I am bound to go," Jack said stolidly.

" Duty ? " I asked.

" Duty, sir," he replied, steadily.

" You are a pair of hypocrites ! " I said suddenly.

" What—what do you mean, sir ? " Jack demanded, looking exceedingly uncomfortable.

" I ought to be congratulating you two—instead of you two congratulating—no. That's wrong," I laughed. " You never thought I meant it, Jean ? " I asked, with an air of incredulity.

" Didn't you ? " she asked.

" It was a joke. Rather a clever one. A twofold joke. I thought—as your guardian—it was a neat way of bringing Jack to book. He seemed to be hanging off——"

" Colonel Brecon ! " cried Jack hotly.

" And—I knew that my sister was wanted in her home—or, at least, was not, shall I say, indispensable here ? And the news—Martha really was unequal for once to the occasion ! " I laughed again triumphantly at my diplomacy. If they had only known how accidental it had been ! But then, that is the secret of most diplomacy. " Bless you, my children ! " I said, and hurried away.

Martha never forgave me for my duplicity. I am bearing the estrangement well.

The Sport of Philosophers

SPRINGS, summers, autumns, winters—each within itself longer, by many times longer than the whole year of grown-up life, that slips at last through one's fingers like a knotless thread—pass over the curled darling's brow ; and look at him now, a straight and strengthy stripling, in the savage spirit of sport, springing over rock-ledge after rock-ledge, nor heeding aught as he splashes knee-deep or waistband-high through river-feeding torrents, to the glorious music of his running and ringing reel, after a tongue-hooked salmon, insanely seeking with the ebb of tide, but all in vain, the white breakers of the sea.

No hazel or willow wand, no half-crown rod of ash framed by village wright, is now in his practised hands, of which the very left is dexterous ; but a twenty-feet rod of Phin's, all ring-rustling, and all a-glitter with preserving varnish, limber as the attenuating line itself, and lithe to its topmost tenuity as the elephant's proboscis—the hiccory and the horn without twist, knot, or flaw—from butt to fly a faultless taper, " fine by degrees and beautifully less," the beau-ideal of a rod by the skill of cunning craftsmen to the senses materialised ! A fish—fat, fair and forty ! " She is a salmon, therefore to be woo'd—she is a salmon, therefore to be won "—but shy, timid, capricious, headstrong, now wrathful and now full of fear like any other female whom the cruel artist has hooked by lip or heart, and, in spite of all her struggling, will bring to the gasp at last ; and then with calm eyes behold her lying in the shade dead, or worse than dead, fast-fading, and to be reillumined no more the lustre of her beauty, insensible to sun or shower, even the most perishable of all perishable things in a world of the perishing things.

JOHN WILSON.

The Passage

"Dreams are but the images of our hopes and fears"

By ERNEST RAYMOND

NOW at last, fifteen years having passed since this strange tale closed, I am permitted to tell it to the world. Fifteen years ago Lady Marlyn thought no worthy purpose could be served by throwing under the fierce light of publicity certain mysterious things that were sacred and secret to her, and bathed in pain. Her boy, young Victor Marlyn, was much in the public eye at that time, for there were not wanting those who saw in him the promise of unusual genius. They speak less loftily of him now; all except a few. Perhaps it is really for the few's sake that I am privileged to disclose these things. Though, as Lady Marlyn says, it is a good hour in which to speak; a change has come over men's reading of the cosmic riddles; the old materialism is discredited; in the presence of the unintelligible, the old dogmatic denial has given place to doubt and wonder; and the mystics who have always claimed that they can attain to knowledge by other than scientific roads are treated, if not with acceptance, at least with respect.

I want to tell the story with the utmost simplicity and directness—yes, nakedly. For a professional story-teller this is not easy; his imagination for ever tempts him with possible improvements, urging him to deepen the intensity of such and such a scene, or to order the events, not as they actually happened, but to a fine mounting drama. Against this I have guarded carefully, and Lady Marlyn has helped me. Any fact about which we can conceive for a moment that our imagination has enlarged it, improved upon it, or even created it, we have not suffered to stand.

II

UP to his eleventh year there was nothing remarkable in Victor Marlyn; certainly he was what is usually called a "remote" child, given to absent-mindedness and dreaming, and had he been a girl people would surely have called him *fey*, finding the quality most attractive; as it was, they dubbed him "Scatterbrained." He had abundant humour, as his subsequent writings proved; and when he consented to live in the world of reality he would be as obstreperous and destructive as most. From his first year his sleep, so far as a watching mother could judge, had always been the very picture of a child's untroubled repose. It was almost, declared his grateful father, too good to be true.

And then on the eve of his eleventh birthday, about three o'clock in the morning, he screamed and awoke the whole house. It was a mad scream, such as is drawn only by a moment of acute terror. Lady Marlyn rushed to his bedroom, and in its darkness, as she fumbled for matches, she heard him saying "Oh! Oh!" breathlessly.

"It's all right, my darling. It's all right," she cried. "I am here." And she struck a match and lit a candle.

Victor was sitting up in bed, his eyes staring and his under-lip dropped. She seated herself beside him, and putting her arm about his shoulder, rocked him as if he were four or five instead of just eleven. When he was eased, she inquired what had frightened him so.

"It was a dream," he said. "I had an awful nightmare."

"What did you dream?"

"I dreamt I was in a passage." Victor could hardly speak connectedly, so rapid were his breaths. "And there was a door at its end. It was a long, narrow passage, with high brown walls, I think. And something—something unseen was making me go up to that door and through it. I knew I should meet something terrible if I turned its handle and went through. But I had to. I had to do it."

"And did you—did you see anything?"

"I don't know. I can't remember. The last thing I remember was pushing open

the door a little way and seeing that it was pitch dark the other side. Then the fright suddenly became so awful that I woke. . . . Mother, it was—it was *ghastly*."

"Yes, dear," Lady Marlyn soothed. "I'm sure it was. We all have those nightmares sometimes. . . ."

And she recalls that he looked up at her with a glance wiser and more tolerant than a child's, as if he realised that she couldn't understand.

III

WHAT could they do but regard it as a violent nightmare and forget it after a few days? A year passed, and nothing happened to bring it back into Victor's mind or his parents'. But when on the morning of his twelfth birthday they went into his bedroom to give him "Many happy returns," his first words were, "Mother, I had that nightmare again last night."

"What nightmare, dear?"

"That dream about the passage. I was in it again; only this time I was on the farther side of that door I opened last year. I know that, because there was a door closed behind me. Besides, I *felt* I was there. And the passage was just the same as the one I had left; it seemed like a continuation of it—it was long and narrow and had brown walls—and there was a door at the end that something was driving me to go through. And I just had to go up to it—just as last year—though I think it was a shade less terrifying this time. I remember thinking, 'It'll be all right. If I have the courage to turn the handle and push it a little way the fright will wake me'—because I was sort of striving in my dream to wake. And I went up, though the horror of it was awful, and opened the door a little way—and my heart seemed to stop, and that woke me. But I didn't scream this time."

It was coincidence, they said; or a forgotten memory stowed down in his subconscious mind that had renewed the nightmare on the anniversary of its first appearance. They worried no further.

But Victor worried; and with that secret shame of his own fears that is an ache in many a childhood. Throughout the year, so he told them afterwards, he lived with a secret dread of the night before his thirteenth birthday. Each daylight would remind him that he was one day nearer his birthday eve. There were happy periods, of course, when interesting occupations crowded the ache from his mind, and he could play with other children as though he, like them, were completely care-free. At his preparatory school he was doing well both in work and games, though in neither brilliantly; he liked his school, and among his secret thoughts was a vast relief that his birthday fell in the Christmas holidays; for his imagination would vividly picture what would happen if he dreamt his nightmare in the dormitory with the other boys, and woke and screamed, and earned their ridicule. Almost, so sharply did he imagine this scene, he would suffer the pain of their ridicule. In moments alone he would recoil from the picture and gasp.

The fear became an obsession, as it was bound to do, and on the vigil of his thirteenth birthday he found no relief till he suddenly resolved that he would not sleep at all that night; then the relief was like an exquisite joy. Yes, he would keep himself awake with a light and some books.

He smuggled candles into his room, and when the house sounded no longer with feet or voices, lit them and began to read. That night he read the whole of "Midshipman Easy" and a part of "Peter Simple," and only abandoned the books when the sounds began in the house again. Even then he kept awake till the grey daylight peeped round the blinds. No dream came to him as he dozed.

Here was a conquest; always he could do this—every birthday eve. He was free of his ache. That thirteenth birthday was a happier day for him than anybody suspected; it was like the first hours of one who has been granted a reprieve and release.

The succeeding year was without the hidden fear; and the other interests had room to expand and master him. He got into the First Eleven, and the Headmaster was working him for one of the smaller scholarships. Not a Winchester scholarship, said his master, but a decent classical exhibition to Harrow, or some such smaller prize. His talents were so strangely ordered that some of his subjects were atrocious. Mathematics, for example, had no interest for him, and seemed to elude the grasp of his brain, and all subjects that dealt with external facts, like history and geography, failed to stimulate him to the necessary

work; while, on the other hand, he was extraordinarily quick to apprehend, and respond delightedly to any rarefied thought or philosophical idea that *lay behind* the words of great writers. "What are you to do with a boy," laughed the Head, "who can give points to his masters in the exegesis of Plato, and yet can't struggle out of the first book of Euclid?" He seemed to take especial pleasure in all writers who laughed tolerantly, but pityingly, at the self-tortures of mankind. "It's as though they were hiding some peculiar knowledge behind their laughter," said he one day to his master; which was a strange remark for a boy of thirteen.

IV

THE night before his fourteenth birthday he prepared himself, deliberately and without fear, for his long watch. Again he secreted candles and books in his bedroom, and when midnight had stilled the house, rose on his arm, lit the candles, and began to read. He read on far into the early hours, till his eyes wearied. Should he close them for a little, mounting his will as a sentinel to hold sleep away? It would be dangerous, for sleep was prowling close. Still, if the candles were kept alight, and he turned his eyes towards them . . . Need I say that, under his fallen lids his thoughts ran quickly and easily into a pleasantly jumbled country, and thence into the darkness of sleep.

He was standing in the passage again, with a closed door behind and another ahead. And somehow he knew, as he stood there, that the door behind was the *third* through which he had passed, and so, whether or not he had slept a year ago, he must have gone through it. He knew also, though there was nothing in the bare passage to tell him, that ahead were eight more doors. After to-night, seven more lengths of passage and seven more doors! For seven more years this dream must recur. An agony of despair seized him; he had not escaped—he was caught by this thing—and his sentence was seven years. He was different from everyone else in the world, marked off for a peculiar pain. And after the despair came a sense of unutterable loneliness, as he realised that he was shut in between many doors. For he knew, with the same pitiless certainty that he knew everything else, that the doors behind could never be opened again from this side. And even as he was thinking these thoughts, the nameless compulsion was upon him to advance to the door ahead; and as he yielded to it slowly, the despair and the loneliness were lost in the multiplying terror: he must turn its handle and go through; and something so awful was beyond that it was drawing him by the sheer perfection of its terror. He turned the handle and opened up a few inches of darkness . . . more inches. . . .

He had awakened with a spasm, and his eyes were staring at the candles which seemed to have burned nothing since last he looked at them.

Well, with the passing days he got used to the idea that he was sentenced, just as one can get used to being blind, or without a limb. One can forget it. He refused to let it worry him, till his fifteenth birthday should be looming close. Even then he approached his ordeal with something of a cold resignation; on the vigil night he made no attempt to ward off sleep, but got into his bed with the inward shrug that one gives to a dentist's chair. A few seconds of unimaginable pain and all would be over.

But he was aware, as he stood in the passage, that a new feeling had entered his dream; very faintly, like a flavour of which one both suspects and doubts the presence; terrified though he might be of opening his door and meeting that teeming darkness, he was—was he not?—almost *eager* to do it. There had come to him the dim idea—I labour and stumble now in trying to express what Victor meant, because he was never able to express it himself—that the something into which he was going was not only terrible, but *good*. His apprehension of this knowledge was purely emotional; it had no warranty in reason; it was like one's knowledge, he would say, that the ultimate darkness of a cave, lost in the depths of a living mountain, is terrible, and the dawn, crimsoning the same mountain's summit, is good. One just knows these things and their analysis is impossible. So to-night he went to his door, with a steady step, and tasting in the midst of that unspeakable fear, a very faint flavour of the exhilaration that the old martyrs knew.

The sweat was on his forehead when he woke and his heart was still racing, but he remembered that glimmer of eagerness as if it had been a pin-point of light.

It made him talk to his mother again

about his dream, and she, though showing him only smiles and a tranquil interest, began to be bewildered and afraid. Lightly she suggested that the whole matter should be laid before a brain specialist. "There's Bernard Ingham," said she. "If we did nothing else we should at least give him something to interest him."

"*I* don't mind," agreed Victor, equally cheerfully.

"All right. And of course he *may* be able to rid you of it entirely."

But at that Victor became thoughtful, and presently he perturbed his mother with a strange statement.

"It's funny, mother, but I don't think I *want* to get rid of it now. I can't explain, but I—I almost *like* it—now."

"Well, dear," she could only cover her treacherous thoughts with a smile, "we can but hear what he says."

Dr. Bernard Ingham was an old gentleman with a head of white hair that reminded one of Franz Lizst. His manner was genial and hearty, full of encouragement and understanding, as is the manner of all great consulting specialists. Victor found himself telling that watching, interested face everything about his dream that was tellable, and crumpling his brows as he struggled to tell those other thoughts that lay beyond the frontier of words. And when Lady Marlyn was closeted with the doctor alone he pronounced his opinion in some such phrases as these:

"My dear lady, I know a great deal about the brain. Indeed, I have arrived at that advanced position in knowledge which consists in knowing that most things have yet to be known. What I know more certainly than anything else is that the powers of the human instrument are infinitely greater than we have suspected. When I say 'we' I mean we of the western world. Indian wisdom is very much wiser. I know at last that I can disbelieve no tale, whether of magical tricks or mystical experience, howsoever extravagant it may seem. Why, bless my soul, there was a time in my youth when we called hypnotism quackery, and thought-reading and telepathy; now they are commonplaces in our work. I remember when I first read in some psychic text book that clairvoyants could see round every human body a brightly-coloured aura whose tints revealed the character of its owner, I remember saying, 'Good God, what hocus-pocus!' I don't say it now. Once a friend told me that an Indian of his acquaintance could move distant objects by his spiritual force alone—and the truth is, he *could*. Of late years I have made it my business to study the abnormal experiences of saints and mystics and similar cattle—their visions, voices, dreams and moments of what they call variously 'illumination,' 'knowledge,' 'recognition' and so on. Spiritual biography is riddled with them. I have a fancy that your boy's experience is something of this order, which means that his brain plays no part in it, or no part that a psychiatrist can understand. If that is so, I shouldn't fear; it may mean that he will have powers above the ordinary. Granted that they will give him pain; but it seems a law that we must pay for such gifts in pain."

▼

WHEN Victor stood again in the passage, dreaming on the eve of his sixteenth birthday, he knew that the eagerness and excitement had gained an ascendancy over the fear. The eagerness was his true response, he knew, and the fear was only weakness. There was still an overpowering terror in opening the door, but it was an emotion that he almost welcomed. He sought it and hastened it, as the old martyrs used to drag the swords of their executioners into their breasts.

It was now that he began to toil at verse-writing. Some of the poems published later were actually written in this, his seventeenth year, and when they appeared the critics acclaimed in them, despite their crudeness, a true vision. They said, I remember, that he looked upon the phenomena of life with the tolerant humorous gaze of one who sees it from beyond. They dropped, of course, into their stock phrases, declaring that, for one of his age, he had a remarkable power of seeing the universal behind the particular, and of treating everything *sub specie aeternitatis*. To me, who can only express myself in a pedestrian prose, their dominant meaning appeared to be: "Why, oh why, dear people, have you worried so long? Why are ye fearful, ye of little faith? All—all is good, even that which to our shaded eyes seems evil. And this you shall one day know." They seemed like messages sent back from some far-thrown outpost, where they had been written by one who already knew.

At times, when talking of them, he would even claim some kind of mystical knowledge. "Can there be a knowledge," he would say, "that you don't really know, but only *feel*? A knowledge whose details are a blank to you and which is none the less an exultant thrilling certainty? It's so funny, mother, but when I read the writings of the mystics I get the impression that they, one and all, have achieved the same knowledge, and, one and all, are trying to *get it across* to us. They can't express it, of course, because it can't be told in terms of this world, but here and there there must be people like myself whose whole nature cries out 'Yes! Yes!' to all they write."

So he came to the seventh door, and the dream had yet smaller terror for him now. He laughed about it in the morning.

"Only four more doors, mother!"

And his mother laughed cheerfully, too.

"It's very appropriate that it should finish with your twenty-first birthday."

"Yes," nodded Victor, and his eyes drifted away as he offered one of his queer remarks.

"Yes, I believe I shall come of age that night in more senses than one."

VI

MANY have noticed that the verse he wrote in his nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first years—if it be considered purely as poetry, which is the successful incarnation of a seer's vision in simple, sensuous imagery—showed all the features of decline. It lost the earlier freshness, and took on the tormented character of a verse so pregnant with ineffable thoughts that it has only come to misshapen birth. Some of it was reminiscent of Blake's prophetic writings, which may be intelligible when mankind reaches the level of their source, or may, perhaps, have no place of standing in this world. He lost interest in the composition of poetry, and found a greater happiness in music. You would more often see him at his piano than striving with pens and paper at his desk. Now and then he achieved a few little limpid poems of the older sort, and it is by virtue of such as these, which are the treasures of those who love his work, that people speak of him as having caught and rendered for human ears some echoes of the music that is heard in the wide spaces of eternity.

So I come to the last eve. He had been impatient and restive all day and flushed with excitement. But not till the last minutes before retiring to his room did he speak of the night. Nor did his mother allude to it, for she was strangely apprehensive. About eleven o'clock he kissed her good-night, and she held him long. Before she had suffered him to go he had placed his hand on her hair.

"Good-night, mother," he repeated.

And she answered cheerfully:

"Good-night, my dear. It's fine to think that in a few hours you will no longer be a minor."

The poet in him caught at the words.

"No longer a minor. . . . We are all minors yet, mother, I think. All mankind. There have only been one or two in all history who grew to full manhood: Shakespeare, of course, towards the end; and Christ, from his thirtieth year; and Buddha, from the moment of his illumination under the Bo Tree; and Beethoven, I fancy; and Keats was getting there, when he died. Perhaps more of the Indians have grown up; we westerns are really only dangerous children. . . . How terrible must have been the loneliness of each of these exceptional ones! He alone in a world of lesser creatures! It must have been like the loneliness of some castaway on an island where are none but immature peasants, to whom he can never utter a large thought . . . they would only stare! . . ."

"Well, don't think too much of these things," said his mother hurriedly. "They may keep you awake."

"Oh! no, no. I shall sleep to-night. . . . And, mother, about that curious dream that has haunted me and that I shall certainly dream to-night, I want you to know that all pain seems to have left it, and to-night I shall be possessed only by an extraordinary exhilaration. Already I am feeling its approach. I feel eager to stand in that last stretch of the passage and to open that final door. But more than eagerness will possess me when I am there. It's an exhilaration, mother, that's an actual physical delight, catching one's throat. I have had the same experience in a smaller way when I have run down the sands on a burningly hot day towards the glorious invitation of the sea. I believe a man can

feel it when he is expecting the coming of his bride into his arms."

VII

NO sound disturbed the house that night, but in the morning Victor Marlyn was found to have died in his sleep, and the doctors said that his heart had failed him. But the expression on his marble face was such as turned the edge of our first pain, and has remained in our thoughts for ever, like a healing balm. It was radiant with recognition.

Mr. Pickwick Takes The Reins

IT was a curious little green box on four wheels, with a low place like a wine-bin, for two behind, and an elevated perch for one in front, drawn by an immense brown horse, displaying great symmetry of bone. An hostler stood near it, holding by the bridle another immense horse—apparently a near relative of the animal in the chaise—ready saddled for Mr. Winkle.

" Bless my soul ! " said Mr. Pickwick, as they stood upon the pavement while the coats were being put in—" bless my soul ! who's to drive ? I never thought of that."

" Oh ! you, of course," said Mr. Tupman.

" Of course," said Mr. Snodgrass.

" I ! " exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

" Not the slightest fear, sir," interposed the hostler. " Warrant him quiet, sir—a hinfant in arms might drive him."

" He doesn't shy, does he ? " enquired Mr. Pickwick.

" Shy, sir ? He wouldn't shy if he was to meet a vaggin-load of monkeys with their tails burned off."

The last recommendation was indisputable. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass got into the bin ; Mr. Pickwick ascended to his perch, and deposited his feet on a floor-clothed shelf erected beneath it for that purpose.

" Now, Shiny Villiam," said the hostler to the deputy hostler, " give the gen'l'm'n the ribbins." " Shiny Villiam "—so called, probably, from his sleek hair and oily countenance—placed the reins in Mr. Pickwick's left hand ; and the upper hostler thrust a whip into his right.

" Wo—o ! " cried Mr. Pickwick, as the tall quadruped evinced a decided inclination to back into the coffee-room window.

" Wo—o ! " echoed Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass from the bin.

" Only his playfulness, gen'l'm'n," said the head hostler, encouragingly, " jist kitch hold on him, Villiam." The deputy restrained the animal's impetuosity, and the principal ran to assist Mr. Winkle in mounting.

" T'other side, sir, if you please."

" Blowed if the gen'l'm'n worn't a-gettin' up on the wrong side ! " whispered a grinning post-boy, to the inexpressibly gratified waiter.

Mr. Winkle, thus instructed, climbed into his saddle with about as much difficulty as he would have experienced in getting up the side of a first-rate man-of-war.

" All right ? " enquired Mr. Pickwick, with an inward presentiment that it was all wrong.

" All right," replied Mr. Winkle, faintly.

" Let 'em go ! " cried the hostler, " Hold him in, sir ; " and away went the chaise and the saddle-horse, with Mr. Pickwick on the box of the one, and Mr. Winkle on the back of the other, to the delight and gratification of the whole inn-yard. CHARLES DICKENS.

An Episode Under The Terror

Crime and conscience in revolutionary France

By HONORÉ DE BALZAC

ON the twenty-second of January, 1793, about eight o'clock in the evening, an old lady was descending the steep hill which ends in front of the church of St.-Laurent, on Faubourg St.-Martin, Paris. It had snowed so hard all day that footfalls could scarcely be heard. The streets were deserted; the not unnatural dread inspired by the silence was intensified by the terror under which France was then groaning; so that the old lady had not as yet met anybody; her sight, which had long been poor, made it impossible for her to see, in the distance, by the dim light of the street-lanterns, the few people who were scattered about like ghosts in the broad highway of the *faubourg*. She went her way courageously, alone, through that solitude, as if her age were a talisman certain to preserve her from all evil.

When she had passed Rue des Morts, she fancied that she could distinguish the firm and heavy step of a man walking behind her. It seemed to her that it was not the first time that she had heard that sound; she was terrified at the thought that she had been followed, and she tried to walk even faster, in order to reach a brightly lighted shop, hoping to be able to set at rest in the light the suspicions which had seized her. As soon as she had stepped beyond the horizontal rays of light that shone from the shop, she suddenly turned her head and caught sight of a human figure in the fog; that indistinct glimpse was enough for her; she staggered for an instant under the weight of the fear which oppressed her, for she no longer doubted that she had been attended by the stranger from the first step that she had taken outside of her home; and the frantic longing to escape a spy gave her additional strength. Incapable of reasoning, she quickened her pace, as if she could possibly elude a man who was surely more active than she. After running for some minutes, she reached a pastry-cook's shop, rushed in, and fell rather than sat down upon a chair in front of the counter.

The instant that she rattled the latch of the door, a young woman, who was engaged in embroidering, raised her eyes, recognised through the glass door the old-fashioned mantle of violet silk in which the old lady was wrapped, and hastily opened a drawer, as if to take out something which she intended to give her. Not only did the young woman's movement and expression denote a wish to be rid of the stranger at once, as if she were one of those people whom one is not glad to see, but she also uttered an impatient exclamation when she found the drawer empty; then, without glancing at the lady, she rushed from behind the counter, towards the back-shop, and called her husband, who appeared instantly.

"Wherever have you put —— ?" she asked him with a mysterious expression, indicating the old lady by a glance, and not finishing her sentence.

Although the pastry-cook could see only the enormous black silk bonnet, surrounded by violet ribbons, which the stranger wore upon her head, he disappeared, after a glance at his wife, which seemed to say: "Do you suppose that I am going to leave *that* on your counter?"

Amazed by the old lady's silence and immobility, the trades-woman walked towards her, and as she examined her she was conscious of a feeling of compassion, and perhaps of curiosity as well. Although the stranger's complexion was naturally sallow, like that of a person vowed to secret austerities, it was easy to see that some recent emotion had made her even paler than usual. Her bonnet was so arranged as to conceal her hair, which was presumably whitened by age, for the neatness of the collar of her dress indicated that she did not wear powder. That lack of adornment imparted to her face a sort of religious

asceticism. Her features were serious and dignified. In the old days the manners and customs of people of quality were so different from those of people belonging to the lower classes, that one could easily distinguish a person of noble birth. So that the young woman was convinced that the stranger was a *ci-devant*, and that she had belonged to the court.

" Madame," she said involuntarily and with respect, forgetting that that title was proscribed.

The old lady did not reply. She kept her eyes fastened upon the shop-window, as if some terrifying object were there apparent.

" What's the matter with you, citizeness?" asked the proprietor who appeared at that moment.

The citizen pastry-cook aroused the lady from her reverie by handing her a little pasteboard box covered with blue paper.

" Nothing, nothing, my friends," she replied in a mild voice.

She looked up at the pastry-cook as if to bestow a grateful glance upon him; but when she saw a red cap on his head she uttered an exclamation:

" Ah! you have betrayed me!"

The young woman and her husband replied by a gesture of horror which made the stranger blush, perhaps for having suspected them, perhaps with pleasure.

" Excuse me," she said with childlike gentleness.

Then, taking a louis d'or from her pocket, she handed it to the pastry-cook.

" This is the price agreed upon," she added.

There is a sort of poverty which the poor are quick to divine. The pastry-cook and his wife looked at each other and then at the old lady, exchanging the same thought. That louis d'or was evidently the last. The lady's hands trembled as she held out that coin, at which she gazed sorrowfully but without avarice; but she seemed to realise the full extent of the sacrifice. Fasting and poverty were written upon that face, in lines as legible as those of fear and ascetic habits. There were vestiges of past slendour in her clothes: they were worn silk; a neat though old-fashioned cloak, and lace carefully mended—in a word, the rags and tatters of opulence. The trades-people, wavering between pity and self-interest, began by relieving their consciences in words:

" But, citizeness, you seem to be very weak—"

" Would madame like something to refresh herself?" asked the woman, cutting her husband short.

" We have some very good soup," added the pastry-cook.

" It's so cold! Perhaps madame was chilled by her walk? But you can rest here and warm yourself a little."

" The devil is not as black as he is painted," cried the pastry-cook.

Won by the kind tone of the charitable shopkeeper's words, the lady admitted that she had been followed by a stranger, and that she was afraid to return home alone.

" Is that all?" replied the man with the red cap. " Wait for me, citizeness."

He gave the louis to his wife; then, impelled by that species of gratitude which find its way into the heart of a tradesman when he receives an extravagant price for goods of moderate value, he went to don his National guardsman's uniform, took his hat, thrust his sabre into his belt, and reappeared under arms. But his wife had had time to reflect; and, as in many other hearts, reflection closed the open hand of kindliness. Perturbed in mind, and fearing that her husband might become involved in some dangerous affair, the pastry-cook's wife tried to stop him by pulling the skirt of his coat; but, obeying a charitable impulse, the good man at once offered to escort the old lady.

" It seems that the man who frightened the citizeness is still prowling about the shop," said the young woman, nervously.

" I am afraid so," the lady artlessly replied.

" Suppose he should be a spy? Suppose it was a conspiracy? Don't go with her, and take back the box."

These words, whispered in the pastry-cook's ear by his wife, congealed the impromptu courage which had moved him.

" I'll just go out and say two words to him, and rid you of him in short order!" cried the man, opening the door and rushing out.

The old lady, passive as a child and almost dazed, resumed her seat. The worthy tradesman soon reappeared; his face, which was naturally red, and moreover was flushed by the heat of his ovens, had suddenly become livid; he was so terribly frightened that his legs trembled and his eyes resembled a drunken man's.

" Do you mean to have our heads cut off, you miserable aristocrat?" he cried angrily. " Just let us see your heels; don't ever show

your face here again, and don't count on me to supply you with materials for a conspiracy!"

As he spoke, the pastry-cook tried to take from the old lady the small box, which she had put in one of her pockets. But no sooner did the man's insolent hands touch her clothing, than the stranger, preferring to brave the dangers of the street with no other defender than God, rather than to lose what she had purchased, recovered the agility of her youth; she rushed to the door, opened it abruptly, and vanished from the eyes of the dazed and trembling woman and her husband.

As soon as the stranger was out of doors, she walked rapidly away; but her strength failed her, for she heard the snow creak beneath the heavy step of the spy, by whom she was pitilessly followed. She was obliged to stop, and he stopped; she dared neither speak to him nor look at him, whether as a result of the fear which gripped her heart, or from lack of intelligence. She continued her way, walking slowly; thereupon the man slackened his pace, so as to remain at a distance, which enabled him to keep his eye upon her. He seemed to be the very shadow of the old woman.

The clock was striking nine when the silent couple again passed the church of St. Laurent. It is in the nature of all souls, even the weakest, that a feeling of tranquillity should succeed violent agitation; for, although our feelings are manifold, our bodily powers are limited. And so the stranger, meeting with no injury at the hands of her supposed persecutor, chose to discover in him a secret friend, zealous to protect her; she recalled all the circumstances which had attended the unknown's appearance, as if to find plausible arguments in favour of that comforting opinion; and she took pleasure in detecting good rather than evil intentions in his behaviour.

Forgetting the terror which that man had inspired in the pastry-cook, she walked with an assured step into the upper parts of Faubourg St.-Martin. After half an hour she reached a house near the junction of the main street of the faubourg and that which leads to the Barrière de Pantin. Even to-day, that spot is one of the most solitary in all Paris. The north wind, blowing over the Buttes Chaumont and from Belleville, whistled through the houses, or rather the hovels, scattered about in that almost uninhabited valley, where the dividing walls are built of earth and bones. That desolate spot seemed to be the natural refuge of poverty and despair. The man who had persisted in following the wretched creature who was bold enough to walk through those silent streets at night, seemed impressed by the spectacle presented to his eyes. He became thoughtful, and stood in evident hesitation, in the dim light of a lantern whose feeble rays barely pierced the mist.

Fear gave eyes to the old woman, who fancied that she could detect something sinister in the stranger's features; her former terror reawoke, and, taking advantage of the uncertainty which had checked his advance, to glide in the darkness towards the door of the solitary house, she pressed a spring and disappeared with magical rapidity.

¶

THE stranger, motionless as a statue, gazed at that house, which was in some measure the type of the wretched dwellings of the faubourg. That unstable hovel, built of rough stones, was covered with a layer of yellow plaster, so cracked that it seemed in danger of falling before the slightest gust of wind. The roof, of dark brown tiles covered with moss, had sunk in several places so that it seemed likely to give way under the weight of the snow. On each floor there were three windows, the sashes of which, rotted by the dampness and shrunken by the heat of the sun, made it clear that the cold air must find an easy entrance into the rooms. That isolated house resembled an old tower which time had forgotten to destroy. A faint light shone through the irregular windows of the attic at the top of the tumble-down structure, while all the rest of the house was in absolute darkness. The old woman climbed, not without difficulty, the steep, rough staircase, which was supplied with a rope instead of a baluster; she knocked softly at the door of the apartment in the attic, and dropped hastily upon a chair which an old man offered her.

"Hide! hide yourself!" she said. "Although we go out very seldom, everything that we do is known; our footsteps are watched."

"What is there new, pray?" asked another old woman who was seated by the fire.

"The man who was prowling around the house last night followed me to-night"

At these words the three occupants of the attic looked at each other with indications of profound terror on their faces. The old man was the least moved of the three, perhaps because he was in the greatest danger. Under the weight of a great calamity, or under the yoke of persecution, a courageous man begins, so to speak, by preparing to sacrifice himself; he looks upon his days simply as so many victories over destiny. The eyes of the two women, fastened upon this old man, made it easy to divine that he was the sole object of their intense anxiety.

"Why despair of God, my sisters?" he said in a low but powerful voice. "We sang His praises amid the cries of the assassins and the shrieks of the dying at the Carmelite convent. If He decreed that I should be saved from that butchery, it was doubtless because He reserved me for another destiny, which I must accept without a murmur. God protects His people, He may dispose of them at His pleasure. It is of you, not of me, we must think."

"No," said one of the old women; "what are our lives compared with that of a priest?"

"When once I found myself outside of the Abbey of Chelles, I looked upon myself as dead," said that one of the two women who had not gone out.

"Here," replied the other, handing the priest the little box, "here are the wafers.—But," she cried, "I hear someone coming up the stairs."

Thereupon all three listened intently. The noise ceased.

"Do not be alarmed," said the priest, "if someone should try to enter. A person upon whose fidelity we can rely has undoubtedly taken all necessary measures to cross the frontier, and will come here to get the letters which I have written to the Duc de Langeais and to the Marquis de Beauséant, asking them to consider the means of rescuing you from this terrible country, from the death or destitution which awaits you here."

"Then you do not mean to go with us?" cried the two nuns gently, with manifestations of despair.

"My place is where there are victims," said the priest simply.

They held their peace and gazed at their companion with devout admiration.

"Sister Martha," he said, addressing the nun who had gone to buy the wafers, "the messenger I speak of will reply '*Fiat voluntas*' to the word '*Hosanna.*'"

"There is someone on the stairs!" cried the other nun, opening the door of a hiding-place under the lower part of the roof.

This time they could plainly hear, amid the profound silence, the footsteps of a man upon the stairs, which were covered with ridges of hardened mud. The priest crept with difficulty into a sort of cupboard, and the nuns threw over him a few pieces of apparel.

"You may close the door, Sister Agatha," he said in a muffled voice.

The priest was hardly hidden when three taps at the door caused a shock to the two holy women, who consulted each other with their eyes, afraid to utter a single word. Each of them seemed to be about sixty years old. Secluded from the world for forty years, they were like plants habituated to the air of a hot-house, which wilt if they are taken from it. Accustomed to the life of a convent, they were unable to imagine any other life. One morning, their gratings having been shattered, they shuddered to find themselves free. One can readily imagine the species of imbecility which the events of the Revolution had produced in their innocent minds. Incapable of reconciling their conventual ideas with the difficult problems of life, and not even understanding their situation, they resembled children who had been zealously cared for hitherto, and who, deserted by their motherly protector, prayed instead of weeping. And so, in face of the danger which they apprehended at that moment, they remained mute and passive, having no conception of any other defence than Christian resignation.

The man who desired to enter interpreted that silence to suit himself; he opened the door and appeared abruptly before them. The two nuns shuddered as they recognised the man who had been prowling about their house, making inquiries about them, for some time. They did not move, but gazed at him with anxious curiosity, after the manner of the children of savage tribes, who examine strangers in silence. He was tall and stout; but there was nothing in his manner, or appearance, to indicate an evil-minded man. He imitated the immobility of the nuns, and moved his eyes slowly about the room in which he stood.

Two straw mats, laid upon boards, served the two nuns as beds. There was a single

table in the centre of the room, and upon it a copper candlestick, a few plates, three knives, and a round loaf. The fire on the hearth was very low, and a few sticks of wood piled in a corner testified to the poverty of the two occupants. The walls, covered with an ancient layer of paint, demonstrated the wretched condition of the roof, for stains like brown threads marked the intrusion of the rain-water. A relic, rescued doubtless during the pillage of the Abbey of Chelles, adorned the mantel. Three chairs, two chests, and a wretched bureau completed the furniture of the room. A door beside the chimney indicated the existence of an inner chamber.

The inventory of the cell was speedily made by the person who had thrust himself into the bosom of that group under such alarming auspices. A sentiment of compassion was expressed upon his face, and he cast a kindly glance upon the two women, but seemed at least as embarrassed as they. The strange silence preserved by all three lasted but a short time, for the stranger at last divined the mental weakness and the inexperience of the two poor creatures, and he said to them in a voice which he tried to soften: "I do not come here as an enemy, citizenesses."

He paused, and then resumed: "My sisters, if any misfortune should happen to you, be sure that I have had no part in it. I have a favour to ask of you."

They still remained silent.

"If I annoy you, if I embarrass you, tell me so frankly, and I will go; but understand that I am entirely devoted to you; that if there is any service that I can do you, you may employ me without fear; that I alone perhaps am above the law, as there is no longer a king."

There was such a ring of truth in these words that Sister Agatha, the one of the two nuns who belonged to the family of Langeais, and whose manners seemed to indicate that she had formerly been familiar with magnificent festivities and had breathed the air of courts, instantly pointed to one of the chairs, as if to request their guest to be seated. The stranger manifested a sort of mixture of pleasure and melancholy when he saw that gesture; and he waited until the two venerable women were seated, before seating himself.

"You have given shelter," he continued, "to a venerable unsworn priest, who miraculously escaped the massacre at the Carmelite convent."

"*Hosanna!*" said Sister Agatha, interrupting the stranger, and gazing at him with anxious interest.

"I don't think that that is his name," he replied.

"But, monsieur," said Sister Martha hastily, "we haven't any priest here, and——"

"In that case you must be more careful and more prudent," retorted the stranger gently, reaching to the table and taking up a breviary. "I do not believe that you know Latin, and——"

He did not continue, for the extraordinary emotion depicted on the faces of the unhappy nuns made him feel that he had gone too far; they were trembling, and their eyes were filled with tears.

"Do not be alarmed," he said to them cheerily; "I know the name of your guest and your names; and three days ago I was informed of your destitution and of your devotion to the venerable Abbé of ——"

"Hush!" said Sister Agatha innocently, putting her finger to her lips.

"You see, my sisters, that if I had formed the detestable plan of betraying you, I might already have done it more than once."

When he heard these words, the priest emerged from his prison and appeared in the middle of the room.

"I cannot believe, monsieur," he said to the stranger, "that you are one of our persecutors, and I trust you. What do you want with me?"

The priest's saintlike confidence, the nobility of soul that shone in all his features, would have disarmed an assassin. The mysterious personage who had enlivened that scene of destitution and resignation gazed for a moment at the group formed by those three; then he assumed a confidential tone, and addressed the priest in these words:

"Father, I have come to implore you to celebrate a mortuary mass for the repose of the soul of a—a consecrated person, whose body, however, will never lie in holy ground."

The priest involuntarily shuddered. The two nuns, not understanding as yet to whom the stranger referred, stood with necks outstretched, and faces turned towards the two men, in an attitude of intense

curiosity. The priest scrutinised the stranger; unfeigned anxiety was depicted upon his face, and his eyes expressed the most ardent entreaty.

"Very well," replied the priest; "to-night, at midnight, return here, and I shall be ready to celebrate the only funeral service which we can offer in expiation of the crime to which you refer."

The stranger started; but a feeling of satisfaction, at once grateful and solemn, seemed to triumph over some secret grief. Having respectfully saluted the priest and the two holy women, he disappeared, manifesting a sort of mute gratitude which was understood by those three noble hearts. About two hours after this scene the stranger returned, knocked softly at the attic door, and was admitted by Mademoiselle de Beauséant, who escorted him into the second room of that humble lodging, where everything had been prepared for the ceremony.

¶

BETWEEN two flues of the chimney, the nuns had placed the old bureau, whose antiquated shape was covered by a magnificent altar-cloth of green silk. A large crucifix of ebony and ivory, fastened upon the discoloured wall, heightened the effect of its bareness and inevitably attracted the eye. Four slender little tapers, which the sisters had succeeded in standing upon that improvised altar by fixing them in sealing-wax, cast a pale light, which the wall reflected dimly. That faint gleam barely lighted the rest of the room; but, in that it confined its illumination to the consecrated objects, it resembled a ray of light from heaven upon that undecorated altar. The floor was damp. The attic roof, which sloped sharply on both sides, had various cracks through which a biting wind blew. Nothing less stately could be imagined, and yet perhaps there could be nothing more solemn than this lugubrious ceremony.

A silence so profound that it would have enabled them to hear the faintest sound on distant thoroughfares, diffused a sort of sombre majesty over that nocturnal scene. In short, the grandeur of the occasion contrasted so strikingly with the poverty of the surroundings that the result was a sensation of religious awe. The two old nuns, kneeling on the damp floor on either side of the altar, heedless of the deadly moisture, prayed in unison with the priest, who, clad in his pontifical vestments, prepared a golden chalice adorned with precious stones, a consecrated vessel rescued doubtless from the plunderers of the Abbey of Chelles. Beside that pyx, an object of regal magnificence, were the water and wine destined for the sacrament, in two glasses hardly worthy of the lowest tavern. In default of a missal, the priest had placed his breviary on a corner of the altar. A common plate was provided for the washing of those innocent hands, pure of bloodshed. All was majestic, and yet paltry; poor, but noble; profane and holy in one. The stranger knelt piously between the two nuns. But suddenly, when he noticed a band of crape on the chalice and on the crucifix—for, having nothing to indicate the purpose of that mortuary mass, the priest had draped God Himself in mourning—he was assailed by such an overpowering memory that drops of sweat gathered upon his broad forehead. The four silent actors in that scene gazed at each other mysteriously; then their hearts, acting upon one another, communicated their sentiments to each other and became blended into the one emotion of religious pity; it was as if their thoughts had evoked the royal martyr whose remains had been consumed by quicklime, but whose shade stood before them in all its royal majesty.

They celebrated an *obit* without the body of the deceased. Beneath those disjointed tiles and laths, four Christians interceded with God for a king of France, and performed his obsequies without a bier. It was the purest of all possible devotions, an amazing act of fidelity performed without one thought of self. Doubtless, in the eyes of God, it was like the glass of water which is equal to the greatest virtues. The whole of monarchy was there, in the prayers of a priest and of two poor nuns; but perhaps the Revolution, too, was represented, by that man whose face betrayed too much remorse not to cause a belief that he was acting in obedience to an impulse of unbounded repentance.

Instead of saying the Latin words: "*Introibo ad altare Dei*," etc., the priest, obeying a divine inspiration, looked at the three persons who represented Christian France, and said to them, in words which effaced the poverty of that wretched place:

"We are about to enter into God's sanctuary!"

At these words, uttered with most

impressive unction, a thrill of holy awe seized the stranger and the two nuns. Not beneath the arches of St. Peter's at Rome could God have appeared with more majesty than He then appeared in that abode of poverty, before the eyes of those Christians; so true it is that between man and Him every intermediary seems useless, and that He derives His grandeur from Himself alone. The stranger's fervour was genuine, so that the sentiment which joined the prayers of those four servants of God and the king was unanimous. The sacred words rang out like celestial music amid the silence. There was a moment when tears choked the stranger's voice; it was during the paternoster. The priest added to it this Latin prayer, which the stranger evidently understood: "*Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse!* (And forgive the regicides even as Louis XVI himself forgave them!)."

The two nuns saw two great tears leave a moist trace on the manly cheeks of the stranger, and fall to the floor. The Office of the Dead was recited. The *Domine salvum fac regem*, chanted in a low voice, touched the hearts of those faithful royalists, who reflected that the infant king, for whom they were praying to the Most High at that moment, was a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. The stranger shuddered at the thought that there might still be committed a new crime, in which he would doubtless be compelled to take part. When the service was at an end, the priest motioned to the two nuns to withdraw. As soon as he was alone with the stranger, he walked towards him with a mild and melancholy expression, and said to him in a fatherly tone:

"My son, if you have dipped your hands in the blood of the martyr king, confess to me. There is no sin which, in God's eyes, may not be effaced by repentance so touching and so sincere as yours seems to be."

At the first words of the priest, the stranger made an involuntary gesture of terror; but his face resumed its tranquillity, and he met the astonished priest's eye with calm assurance.

"Father," he said to him in a perceptibly tremulous voice, "no one is more innocent than I of bloodshed."

"I am bound to believe you," said the priest.

There was a pause, during which he examined the penitent more closely; then, persisting in taking him for one of those timid members of the Convention who sacrificed a consecrated and inviolate head in order to preserve their own, he continued in a solemn voice:

"Remember, my son, that to be absolved from that great crime, it is not enough not to have actually taken part in it. Those who, when they might have defended thei king, left their swords in the scabbard, will have a very heavy account to settle with the King of Heaven. Ah, yes!" added the old priest, shaking his head with a most expressive movement, "yes, very heavy! For, by remaining idle, they became the involuntary accomplices of that ghastly crime."

"Do you think," inquired the thunderstruck stranger, "that indirect participation will be punished? Is the soldier guilty who is ordered to join the shooting-squad?"

The priest hesitated. Pleased with the dilemma in which he had placed that puritan of royalty of planting him between the dogma of passive obedience, which, according to the partisans of monarchy, should be predominant in all military codes, and the no less important dogma which sanctifies the respect due to the person of kings, the stranger was too quick to see in the priest's hesitation a favourable solution of the doubts by which he seemed to be perturbed. Then, in order to give the venerable Jansenist no longer time to reflect, he said to him:

"I should blush to offer you any sort of compensation for the funeral service which you have just performed for the repose of the king's soul and for the relief of my conscience. A thing of inestimable value can be paid for only by an offering which is beyond all price. Deign, therefore, to accept, monsieur, the gift that I offer you of a blessed relic. The day will come, perhaps, when you will realise its value."

As he said this, the stranger handed the ecclesiastic a small box of light weight; the priest took it involuntarily, so to speak, for the solemnity of the man's words, the tone in which he said them, and the respect with which he handled the box, had surprised him beyond measure. They returned then to the room where the two nuns were awaiting them.

"You are," said the stranger, "in a house whose owner, Mucius Scævola, the plasterer who lives on the first floor, is famous throughout the section for his patriotism; but he is secretly attached to the Bourbons. He used to be a huntsman in the service of

Monseigneur le Prince de Conti, and he owes his fortune to him. If you do not go out of his house, you are safer than in any place in France. Stay here. Devout hearts will attend to your necessities, and you may await without danger less evil times. A year hence, on the twenty-first of January (as he mentioned the date he could not restrain an involuntary gesture), if you continue to occupy this dismal apartment, I will return to celebrate again a mass of expiation."

He said no more. He bowed to the silent occupants of the attic, cast a last glance upon the evidences of their poverty, and went away.

¶

TO the two innocent nuns, such an adventure had all the interest of a romance; and so, as soon as the venerable abbé informed them of the mysterious gift so solemnly bestowed upon him by that man, the box was placed upon the table and the three anxious faces, dimly lighted by the candle, betrayed an indescribable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the box, and found therein a handkerchief of finest linen, drenched with perspiration; and, on unfolding it, they saw stains.

"It is blood!" said the priest.

"It is marked with the royal crown!" cried the other nun.

The two sisters dropped the precious relic with a gesture of horror. To those two ingenuous souls the mystery in which the stranger was enveloped became altogether inexplicable; and as for the priest, from that day he did not even seek an explanation of it.

The three prisoners soon perceived that a powerful arm was stretched over them, in spite of the Terror.

In the first place, they received a supply of wood and provisions; then the two nuns realised that a woman must be associated with their protector, when someone sent them linen and clothing which enabled them to go out without being noticed by reason of the aristocratic cut of the garments which they had been forced to retain; and lastly, Mucius Scævola gave them two cards of citizenship. It often happened that information essential to the priest's safety reached him by devious ways; and he found this advice so opportune that it could have been given only by somebody initiated in state secrets.

Despite the famine which prevailed in Paris, the outcasts found at the door of their lodging rations of white bread, which was brought there regularly by invisible hands; they believed, however, that they could identify Mucius Scævola as the mysterious agent of this beneficence, which was always as ingenious as it was timely. The noble occupants of the attic could not doubt that their protector was the person who had come to ask the priest to celebrate the mortuary mass on the evening of the twenty-second of January, 1793; so that he became the object of a peculiar sort of worship to those three beings, who had no hope except in him, and lived only through him. They had added special prayers for him to their daily devotions; night and morning those pious souls offered up entreaties for his happiness, for his prosperity, for his salvation, and prayed to God to rescue him from all snares, to deliver him from his enemies, and to grant him a long and peaceful life.

Their gratitude, being renewed every day, so to speak, was necessarily accompanied by a feeling of curiosity which became more intense from day to day. The circumstances which had attended the appearance of the stranger were the subject of their conversation; they formed innumerable conjectures about him, and the diversion which their preoccupation with him afforded them with a benefaction of a new sort. They were fully determined not to allow the stranger to evade their friendship when he should return, according to his promise, to commemorate the sad anniversary of the death of Louis XVI.

That night, so impatiently awaited, came at last. At midnight they heard the sound of the stranger's heavy steps on the old, wooden staircase; the room had been arrayed to receive him, the altar was in place. This time the sisters opened the door beforehand and went forth eagerly to light the staircase. Mademoiselle de Langeais even went down a few steps.

"Come," she said to him in a tremulous and affectionate voice, "come, we are waiting for you."

The man raised his head, cast a gloomy glance upon the nun, and made no reply. She felt as if a garment of ice had fallen upon her, and she said no more; at sight of him, gratitude and curiosity expired in all their hearts. He may have been less cold, less silent, less awe-inspiring than he appeared to those poor souls, whom the exaltation of their feeling inclined to an outpouring

of friendliness. The three unhappy prisoners, understanding that he proposed to remain a stranger to them, resigned themselves to it. The priest fancied that he detected upon the stranger's lips a smile that was instantly repressed when he saw the preparations that had been made to receive him. He heard the mass and prayed; but he disappeared after responding by a few words of negative courtesy to Mademoiselle de Langeais's invitation to share the little supper they had prepared.

After the ninth of Thermidor the nuns were able to go about Paris without danger. The old priest's first errand was to a perfumer's shop, at the sign of *La Reine des Fleurs*, kept by Citizen and Citizeness Ragon, formerly perfumers to the Court, who had remained true to the royal family, and of whose services the Vendeans availed themselves to correspond with the princes and the royalist committee in Paris. The abbé, dressed according to the style of the period, was standing on the doorstep of that shop, between St.-Roch and Rue des Frondeurs, when a crowd which filled Rue St.-Honoré prevented him from going out.

"What is it?" he asked Madame Ragon.

"Oh! it's nothing," she replied; "just the tumbril and the executioner, going to the Place Louis XV. Ah! we saw him very often last year; but to-day, four days after the anniversary of the twenty-first of January, we can look at that horrible procession without distress."

"Why so?" said the abbé; "what you say is not Christian."

"Why, it's the execution of Robespierre's accomplices; they defended themselves as long as they could, but they're going now themselves where they have sent so many innocent people."

The crowd passed like a flood. Abbé de Marolles, yielding to an impulse of curiosity, saw over the sea of heads, standing on the tumbril, the man who, three days before, had listened to his mass.

"Who is that," he said, "that man who——"

"That is the headsman," replied Monsieur Ragon, giving the executioner his monarchical name.

"My dear, my dear," cried Madame Ragon, "monsieur l'abbé is fainting!"

And the old woman seized a phial of salts, in order to bring the old priest to himself.

"Doubtless," said the old priest, "he gave me the handkerchief with which the king wiped his brow when he went to his martyrdom! Poor man! That steel knife had a heart, when all France had none!"

The perfumers thought that the unfortunate priest was delirious.

IN YOUTH IS PLEASURE

IN a harbour grene aslepe whereas I lay,
The byrdes sang swete in the middes of the day,
I dreamèd fast of mirth and play:
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Methought I walked still to and fro,
And from her company I could not go—
But when I waked it was not so:
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

Therefore my hart is surely pyght
Of her alone to have a sight
Which is my joy and hartes delight:
In youth is pleasure, in youth is pleasure.

ROBERT WEVER.

Purple and Fine Linen

The drama of a deception

By T. W. HANSHEW

OJEEBI parted a pair of lips that were of the colour of a long-minted halfpenny and made as if to speak again, but Lessington twitched up a thin, blue-veined hand in protest and called out, in the peevish, fretful, impatient tone of chronic invalidism, "Shut up! Be still!" and brought him to a sullen halt. For the thin, reedy, childish treble was ribboning out again through the half darkness with a semi-grotesque, semi-plaintive sing-song drone of melody that was wholly barbaric and made one instinctively think of torn silk and broken flutes and the half-harsh, half-melodious sound of flowing water.

"Then the troubadour begins to trill
Adown the golden street
Of the city, when the sun sinks low;
And a thousand hearts are plunging
To a love they'll never meet,
Through the meadows of the sunset,
Through the poppies and the wheat,
In the land where the dead dreams go."

The voice trailed off into a mere thread of sound, dropped into momentary stillness, then rose suddenly with a shriek of childish laughter that moved farther and farther away and—was gone.

Lessington raised the angle of his chin and directed an inquiring look at his Japanese servitor, but Ojeebi was sullenly resentful, and chose not to understand until he was asked in words.

"It will be the child of the Indian fakir they have taken in next door," he said. "His room is on a level with this. He gives shows with other performers at the music-halls. The child is much alone, and has for company a pet monkey only. It is to that she sings, with that she plays. Oh, there are many of their kind next door," he added, with an upward twitch of the shoulders as he noted the expression of indignant surprise which greeted his explanation. "It is two years since you were injured, Excellency, and the neighbourhood has much gone down."

Lessington flung a sharp look round him. Every luxury that should belong by right to the man whose fortune touched the million mark returned that look with the calm serenity of opulence, as a diamond flashes its splendid insolence into the eyes of a purchaser.

"Gone down!" he said, in the sharp, crisp tones of indignation. "What do you mean by gone down? I see nothing that should impress you with that idea."

"One can see but little from a sick-bed, Excellency. Roses that are carried in give but little impression of the garden in which they grew."

"You needn't remind me of that. What I want to know is, what you mean by saying that the neighbourhood has gone down, and that there is a person connected with music-halls living next door."

"A very famous person in his way," commented Ojeebi, with an upward movement of the shoulders and an outward movement of the hands. "I am told that he commands large salaries; that he is hypnotist, magician, fakir, conjurer, wonder-worker, snake-charmer—everything—and that he packs the 'Alhambra' nightly."

"And you expect me to believe that the Dorians would entertain a person of that class in their home? What rubbish!"

"They no longer live next door, Excellency. The place is now a boarding-house."

"A what?"

"A boarding-house, Excellency. The passage of the bill allowing tramcars to be put in entirely ruined the neighbourhood, and you, sir, are the only one remaining of the former inhabitants."

Lessington's straight brows puckered, and a few sharp, little creases gathered about the corners of his mouth. Was this thing true, or was it some tiny bit of vicious trickery upon Ojeebi's part? For a long time he had been dimly conscious

of a faintly suggested change in the demeanour of the Japanese—a strong contrast with his respectful deference in other days, days dating back not only to the time of the accident which had brought "Lucky Lessington," as they used to call him on the Stock Exchange, to this helpless and hopeless pass, but to the period of his bachelorhood—now three years behind him—when he had rescued the little yellow man from a tight corner in Tokio, and the consciousness of this inexplicable alteration in the man troubled and bewildered him.

He wondered if it could have anything in connexion with Kit's heartless conduct since the transference of the money to her? If the fellow was resenting the bloodless manner in which his master was being neglected, now that everything was signed over to his wife, and the husband's part in the world was over—over at thirty! over and done with whilst yet the pulse of youth drummed in his heart!—and the doctors said that if he lived to be a hundred he might never hope to have the use of his legs again. It was because of that, because his place in the world was gone, because he could no longer manage his affairs, and it had seemed better not to hamper Kit in her efforts to adjust things by compelling her to run to him for signatures to cheques and deeds and things like that, that everything had been made over to her unconditionally.

And after that——! Oh, well! No doubt there's a special corner for fools somewhere in the other world. He'd have plenty of company there, if he had precious little of it here. The fellow who first suggested putting "With all my worldly goods I thee endow" into the marriage service was a pretty good judge of the way to make a woman believe that matrimony is a divine institution and wifehood a sacred charge!

Could it be that the change in Ojeebi was directly traceable to that—that this was his method of showing resentment, evincing disgust at the callous treatment his master was receiving? A moment's thought convinced him of the absurdity of the idea. Ojeebi's veiled insolence was not reserved for his mistress alone, but was directed towards his master also; and the realization of that fact put to death any possibility of attributing the change in him to a tender interest in that master's welfare. Clearly, then, either this amazing assertion of the changed character of the neighbourhood was the truth, or else——

Ojeebi caught the questioning look that shot from the tail of Lessington's eye.

"I do not lie, Excellency," he said, with a lurching movement of the shoulders; "why should I? The neighbourhood is much changed, badly gone down—so badly that it is detrimental to one who has the blessings of such ancestors as I possess to be connected with such a quarter."

"Oh! that's it, is it?" Lessington gave a little sigh of relief. "You want to leave me, eh? And you have been fishing round for an excuse. Well, you may go when your month is up. No! You need not bother to thank me so profoundly, as though I had conferred some special boon upon you. If I had known what was at the bottom of it, you might have gone any time, without troubling to invent that bit of clap-trap regarding the neighbourhood."

"It is not invention, Excellency—it is truth," returned the man, with a slight flash of anger in his voice and eyes. "One may be a servant and still have respect for one's environment, desire to be connected only with the best. It is true what I say of the neighbourhood. It has gone down and down and down. It is no longer of the first; it is no longer, even, of the second rate! It is of the third—and is gradually going lower. I should have thought"—with a jerk of the head and a shrug of the shoulders: a marvel of eloquent pantomime—"that madam would have told your Excellency as much many months ago; she could have done so easily, had she cared."

"Just stop that, please!" flung in Lessington, in sharp, incisive tones. "I don't think I am prepared to discuss my wife with my servant. We will leave your mistress out of the conversation altogether. Let that be understood."

Ojeebi bowed, the colour of his countenance changing from dusky saffron to the hue of yellow kid, and his large, bright eyes—like soft brown velvet with a glint of orange in it—narrowing obliquely.

"It *is* understood," he said, with just the suggestion of a sneer. "I will not again speak madam's name. And it is understood also that I go when my month is up. If Excellency will pardon me, it is now time for his medicine. I will get the water and make it ready for him."

What response, if any, Lessington might have made to this was forestalled by the faint creaking of an opening door and the sound of a third voice coming down the long length of the dim, fast-darkening room.

"Mercy! Ted, are you keeping blind man's holiday?" it said gaily. "You are not attempting to read by this light, are you? Ojeebi, why don't you light the lamp for your master? You are growing very negligent of late. This half-dusk is frightfully trying to the eyes."

"Oh, is that you, Kit?" said Lessington, recognizing the voice. "No; I'm not reading, and I don't want a light, thanks. I rather like this sort of thing, if you don't mind."

"Mind? Goodness! Why should I 'mind,' if it suits you? What a funny, growly old Teddy Bear you are!" Then came a rustle of silken things over the soft, thick carpet, a breath of perfume, the movement of a radiant shadow across the space, where the open window cut a rectangle of skylight in the gathering gloom, and the soft dropping down of something all silken and scented that huddled up like a kitten beside the bed, and laid a sheaf of cool, fragrant flowers beside the pillow. "How is my growly-wowly boy this evening—better? I've brought you some more of those roses you admired so much the day before yesterday, Ted, dear. What are you staring at the wall for, you stupid boy? Turn your grumpy old face this way so I can kiss you—or would you rather I should not?"

Lessington twitched round his head suddenly, and one look at her did the business, just as it had done it for him that day three years ago when he had looked upon her for the first time.

"Oh, Kit," he said, putting out his arms and pulling her head down close to his. "You *do* care for me, don't you, dear? I'm nothing but a useless human hulk these days, but—you *do* care for me still? Just a little bit, Kitten? Don't you, dear?"

"Care for you?"—she put her fluffy, yellow head down into the curve of his neck, and made a queer sort of sound, then lifted it suddenly and laughed, flirting back a loose strand of hair with a hand that dashed something from her eyes in passing—"why, of course I care, Ted. I've always cared, and I always shall. Who has been putting silly ideas like that into your head?"

Lessington moved uneasily; his eyes, shifting from hers, sought the wall, and began following out the zig-zag lines of the pattern which ran up it and lost themselves in the gloom overhead. It was not easy to put into words the ungracious thoughts which beset him in the face of that challenging look; it was not easy to hint of doubts and misgivings with that soft, warm hand laid lovingly over his own. True, she might be the cleverest actress in all the world, the most heartless of wives, the most adroit of dissimulators; but when she spoke and looked like that——

"Oh, I don't know," he answered evasively; "nobody, of course. It's just a fancy. One gets fancies, you know, when one lies here like this—hopeless—out of the world, and with no chance of ever being of it again. Oh!"—with a sudden rebellious outburst, that knotted his brows and made his thin, pale hands tighten—"it's not right! It's not just! What did I ever do to anybody to merit a punishment like this? Why should I have been smitten—I who had so much to live for—and others who would gladly have died be left to struggle on? It is not right, I tell you—it is not just!"

"Ted!" The soft hand closed tighter, with the gentle reassuring pressure one uses to a frightened child. "You mustn't, dear! You only upset yourself unnecessarily. Try to bear it bravely, there's a good boy. Try to remember that it might have been worse, much worse, dear, for—me!"

"But not for me!" he flung back irritably. "It would have been better for me if it had finished me altogether. Why didn't it? What was the use of sparing my life if I might never do anything more with it? Struck down in the very flower of my youth! Struck down in the moment of my greatest triumph, on the threshold of the biggest coup I had ever designed in all my life!"

"But, dear, you carried it to success just the same. Remember, you had designed everything so well that I was able to close up the 'deal' for you. You mustn't get to thinking that because you were not able to take an active part in the affairs of the Milling and Mining Company that anybody but *you* actually carried it to success, anybody but *you* really won the

fortune that came to us by it. Try to remember that, Teddy Bear; try to remember how much we *have* been blest."

"I'd give it all—every penny of it—to be able to walk again," he said, with a whimpering note in his voice that was like the cry of a hurt child. "I've got my brain still—I could win other millions if I could only go into the world again; and—and I'd give it all, I tell you, if I could only have the use of my legs again. What's the use of living, what's the use of having an intellect, if you have to lie here, where any fool on earth can play pranks on you and tell you any lie in Christendom, knowing that you can't even crawl to the window to learn the truth about it."

He was conscious of a faint twitching of the hand which lay over his—of the merest shadow of a nervous movement—as he spoke, and, even in that dim light, he could see that her lips were pressed together firmly, as though she were bent upon hiding some disturbing influence.

"But, Ted, dear, that is nonsense," she said gently. "Who should wish to lie to you? And what could 'being able to crawl to the window' bring about to prove anybody's truth or falsehood, you silly, fanciful boy? If there is anything to be seen from there that you would like to be told about, haven't you Ojeebi—haven't you me, dear—to tell you?"

Lessington sucked in a tremendous underlip and fought hard to steady his voice.

"Will you go to it now and tell me something?" he asked agitatedly. "Will you?"

"Why, yes—most certainly, dear," she answered; then rose, and walked over and stood silhouetted against the rectangle of skylight. "See! I'm here, you funny old Teddy Bear. Now what is it you want to know, dear?"

"Tell me what sort of a neighbourhood it is?"

"Tell you——" She started speaking in a sharp, brittle tone, then broke off suddenly, and laughed aloud. "What a remarkable, what a funny, question! Why, surely you know? Surely you remember? When you bought this house, and brought me here a bride, you said yourself that it was one of the very best neighbourhoods in town."

"But what is it now? Is it still the same?"

She looked at him—directly at him—and smiled serenely.

"Why, yes," she said, lying deliberately. "What in the world should make you believe it wasn't? Surely, if you had asked Ojeebi——"

She turned and looked over at the Japanese with the air of one who would say: "How stupid of you to put your master to the necessity of asking me such a silly question, when you could have told him this yourself." But Ojeebi met that look with one of insolent assurance.

"All lanes come to an end *some* time, madam," he said, with an upward movement of the shoulders. "Excellency has been pleased to accept my resignation. I am leaving his service at the end of the month."

She seemed to stiffen perceptibly; her lips closed in a white, straight line. She stood a moment looking him straight in the eyes; then flirted upward one hand, and spoke.

"I think you need not wait until then," she said, in a voice of perfect calmness. "An unwilling servant is never a desirable thing to retain. If you will come with me I will pay you your wages, and you may go at once."

"I shall be gratified," he answered, with bland insolence. "Excellency, I have the honour to bid you farewell. Madame will find me awaiting her in the passage. I have long foreseen this moment, and my effects are ready packed."

He turned as he ceased speaking, bowed to his ex-master, and, ignoring utterly the presence of his ex-mistress, passed with fleet, unsounding steps out of the room, leaving the door open as a crowning act of disrespect.

So long as he remained in sight Kitten stood there, staring after him, her lips closely compressed, her eyes bright; then, of a sudden, she moved away from the window, and stood beside her husband.

"Ted," she began, in an agitated voice, a voice that had a hint of tears behind it, "Ted, has he dared?"

"Don't mind him—let him go," interposed Lessington. "I've seen this coming for a long time. He wanted an excuse to leave, and—he told me that the neighbourhood had gone down, that all the people of our own sort had left it, that the Dorians were gone, and a theatrical boarding-house had been set up next door."

"I do not have to defend myself from the falsehoods of a servant, I am sure," she

made answer. "Wait a moment, dear. I will pay him off, and come back as soon as I have shown him out."

"I'd let one of the other servants do that, if I were you."

"One of the other servants? Yes—certainly. But it is the mistress that must do the paying-off," she said gently; then stooped and dropped a kiss on Lessington's forehead, and hurried out, closing the door behind her.

Far down at the extreme end of the dark passage she found Ojeebi waiting, his hat in his hand, his coat thrown over his arm, and a tightly strapped travelling bag on the floor at his feet.

"So you have turned traitor at last, have you?" she said in a keen, stinging voice, as she paused before him and, taking out her purse, began to count out the sum due to him. "I have noticed a great change in your conduct for some time past, but I never expected that you would be guilty of treachery. For shame! For shame! And I had so counted on your fidelity."

"Madam has had it so long as I feel it consistent with my self-respect to adhere to it," he said with open insolence. "It has been like a mortification to sleep like a stray cat in an attic; but that I might have continued to endure if that were all. Madam must realise, however, that a valet may be possessed of pride. I, madam, have illustrious ancestors and have no desire to lose caste. I cannot be too particular; and when the mistress of the house makes a practice of nightly going one knows not where nor why, and of stealing back after midnight alone and on foot, and falsely pretends to her husband that she is keeping up social intercourse with people who no longer call, no longer have any desire to know her——"

He got no further. Not that Kit made any indignant outcry, any vulgar display of resentment. It was her dead silence more than anything else that checked him, that cut into him more than any spoken word could have done. She took the vile innuendo as one might suppose a queen would take presumption on the part of an insolent menial; and when she spoke there was not a tremor in her voice.

"That is the door—straight in front of you," she said pointing down the staircase to the left. "It will take you out by the servants' stairs to the servants' door. Shut it after you, please, and—go!"

But, for a long time after he did go, and the noisy bang which told of his leaving the house had passed from echoes into silence, she stood there—just as he had left her—with head erect and lips tightly shut, staring straight before her and not making one movement, not uttering one sound. A dim, still figure in a dark, still house—that and nothing more.

II

THE rectangle of skylight was paling, dwindling, merging like a dissolving view into the velvety darkness of the summer night when she came back into the room, and Lessington, rousing himself from the gloomy reverie into which he had fallen, heard her humming softly to herself as she closed the door and moved across the shadowful room to the table where the lamp stood.

"Is that you, Kit?" he said peevishly. "How long you were, dear. Did you pack him off about his business?"

"Yes—certainly. You couldn't think I would hesitate after a thing like that? Fancy his telling you such an outrageous falsehood. I dare say he has found the atmosphere of a sick room distasteful and forgets that you saved his life over there in Japan. And after all the years you have had him, too. Four, wasn't it, Ted, dear?"

"Nearer five. He travelled all over Europe with me before we were married, sweetheart. I used to be a lot 'on the go' in the old days, you know; and I suppose he found the monotony of this sort of thing too irksome."

"Very likely. It's too bad that the only other male servant in the house should be off duty to-night. But never mind. I'll get you another valet in the morning, Ted, if you can only manage to get along until then. There! I've got the stupid thing alight at last, thank goodness"—as a burst of lamplight gushed out and filled the lovely, luxurious room with a soft radiance that brought all its beauties and all its sumptuousness into splendid prominence. "See! How do I look? I'm going out now."

He turned, and his eyes lit as he saw her standing before him. She looked very young—absurdly young for her eight-and-twenty years—very radiant, and very, very lovely.

"You are prettier than ever," he said

enthusiastically. "Prettier even than when I first saw you, Kit—and I didn't think that any woman in the world *could*. Come and sit here on the side of the bed"—the big, pathetic eyes looking up at her with a yearning sort of entreaty—"you are not going out to-night, too, are you, Kit?"

"Goodness! Yes! I must," she answered gaily. "That's one of the penalties of being a great man's wife, you know; one has to go and go and go continually; one is always in demand."

"Yes, I suppose so," he said bitterly. "But you might chuck it for just one night—*this* night for preference. Always, always, always the same old story; always going out, always finding pleasure elsewhere, and never one night, never one thought for me! Heavens! it's an awful thing for a man to live to know that nobody in the world cares for him—that even his own wife is glad to get away from him."

"Now, Ted, dear, you mustn't say that. You know very well that it isn't true. You know very well that I love you—that I'd sooner be with you than any place else in the world."

"You take a devilish queer way to show it, then!" he snapped out, with a hollow shaky, unhappy sort of laugh. "Every night the same old thing! Every night a dance or a dinner! Not a thought for me! Not a care what becomes of the useless old hulk to which you are bound. To the devil with the orchard after you've gathered all the fruit that's in it. That's the woman's way always—get what you can out of the man and then chuck him over! What's the good of an orange if all the juice has been sucked out of it? Nobody but an idiot would treasure the empty skin."

"Oh, please!" she said with a weary gesture. "Are we to go over all that again. Can't we have just one interview without that, Ted? Just one! Always the bitter cry that I leave you from choice; that it was only the money I cared for, when Heaven knows it was the last of my thoughts. As if what you possessed was more to me than what you are! Why *will* you harp continually upon that one wretched ignoble string?"

"Why shouldn't I, when the evidence is so clear?" he flung back. "You used to make a pretence of caring, at least in the beginning; you used to have one thought, one occasional hour you could throw away upon me then; but from the moment I made everything over to you, not a night—not one solitary night to spare for me! Always on the go! Always some social engagement! A dance, a dinner, a *musicale*—any stale old excuse to leave me. Oh, no! the money didn't make any difference! Of course not! That's right! Look indignant at the bare suggestion of it. I notice, however, that you never suggest tearing up the deed of transfer and flinging the money back at me as a proof of how little you are supposed to value the possession of it! Is that not so?"

It was true. She never had made that suggestion. She did not make it even now when, if her appearance went for anything, her very soul was torn with indignation; her heart, her pride, her womanhood put to the sword. But whatsoever tempest raged within her, it found no vent through her twitching lips; and he, conscious that he had openly insulted her and flung out at last all the torturing suspicions that beset him, loathed himself for what he had said, and, man-like, turned the dagger in the wound.

"Don't stop with me! I don't want you—I don't want anybody's company! I don't want any service that isn't freely given!" he cried, turning his head on the pillow and winding both arms over it. "Please don't speak to me. Please go away. I want to be alone. I want to be alone."

And in another moment he *was* alone. Turning without a word, she walked away, her face white, opened the door, closed it after her, and passed from sight and sound; and by and by Lessington heard the house door, too, close, and knew just when she passed out into the close, warm darkness of the night.

Who is to account for the vagaries of the human heart? A minute ago he had been torn with self-hate, filled with shame, bitten to the marrow with remorse, for the brutal things he had let his invalid's fractiousness lead him into saying to her; now, the knowledge that she had taken him at his word and gone, awoke in him an unreasoning sense of personal injury, and swamped all other feelings in a deluge of self-pity.

She need not have been so sharp about taking him at his word. She needn't have gone off like that—without a word

without a good-bye kiss; without even a look to his creature comforts! No; she needn't have done that—she wouldn't have done that, if she cared. It was all very well for her to say that she did care, but, after all, actions speak louder than words, and—she *didn't* care for him—she couldn't care for him and yet leave him like this, night after night, week after week, as she had been doing unceasingly for almost two years. It was all very well for her to look indignant at the suggestion that his turning over his money to her was at the bottom of it all; but the fact remained that, as he had reminded her, she never once hinted at proving the fallacy of the suggestion by compelling him to take it back. He wouldn't have consented to it, of course, but—it was such an easy answer to his charge, such a simple way of setting the doubt at rest.

And this was the boasted "fidelity" of women! This was the constancy of Eve! Forsaking Adam when his strength failed him! Not only forsaking him, poor wretch, but causing others to forsake him, too. That was an added bitterness—that she had driven away those who would have remained loyal; barring the door to those of his friends who still cared enough to seek to keep up his acquaintance.

She didn't know that he was aware of that; she didn't know of the letters of reproach he had written and dispatched by Ojeebi fifteen months ago to Trevanion and Harcourt and Ellerslie and others of his old-time cronies; nor did she know of the answers that came back. Answers that were all to the one effect, though couched in different phrases: that the writers did not keep away from him by choice; that they did not merit his reproaches; that they had called at the house with the desire to see him and spend a little time with him, but that Mrs. Lessington had met them at the threshold and repulsed their solicitude—been extremely curt with them, in fact—and had told them it was the doctor's express order that no visitors should be allowed, "and not only declined to allow us to go past the threshold of the front door, dear chap, but gave us to understand that she would prefer us not to call again."

He had said nothing of those letters; had allowed no eye but his to see them. He had simply torn them up into minute fragments and made Ojeebi throw the scraps into the fire. He had never replied to them, never meant to reply to them. He would not let those fellows know what a lie it was, what a bitter awakening had come to him after that bright, short love dream of other days. But some time he would let *her* know of them; some time he would ask her why she had told his friends that deliberate, that callous, lie.

For it was a lie; there was no other name for it—a cold, calculated, unblushing lie—told for no other purpose than to keep his friends from coming to the house. *No* doctor had said that thing! *No* doctor had said that he must see no visitors, receive no friends. As a matter of fact, he had distinctly heard Dr. Harrowby tell Kit on that day when he made his last visit, and whilst they, thinking him sleeping, conversed in whispers without, as usual, leaving the room, he had heard, distinctly *heard* the doctor say: "Of course, if any changed symptoms occur—which I do not in the least anticipate—it will be well to communicate with me at once, Mrs. Lessington. Meantime, keep his mind at ease; let him be as cheerfully surrounded as possible; for I very much fear that he will lie like that to the end, poor fellow; and beyond the paralysis of the lower extremities, he is so young and robust that that 'end' may be years in coming! Be a brave little woman and trust in God, for He is the only doctor you can call upon now. Keep him cheerful, if you can; the mind is an important remedial agent. That's God's way of giving medicine and healing things that man cannot get at!"

That was what the doctor had said; not the other lying thing, but—*that!* And she had chosen to "keep him cheerful," elected to "keep his mind at ease" by forbidding his friends to come to him, by turning him over to the charge of an ungrateful servant and then going her own way untrammelled, uncaring—alone!

She had accepted the doctor's assurance that there was no longer any need for him to call, no longer any hope for improvement—accepted it greedily, heartlessly; not with any rebellion, not with any effort to fight against it, any desire to try and try and try to the last—as a woman who cared surely would have done—she had accepted it, made capital of it, and from that hour to this *no* doctor had ever again been called in to examine, to advise, to give any further opinion on the case!

A strong surge of fierce resentment, of deep determination, swept over his spirit as he remembered that, and he struck his thin hands together and squeezed them until the knuckles cracked.

He would have a doctor call in to-morrow! He had been a weak fool to let her have her way like this, to offer no objection, put forth no demand for medical attendance. True, it was because he had heard Dr. Harrowby's candid verdict on the hopelessness of the case, and knew that that verdict was never meant for his ears, that he had never urged calling him in again; but—if she had really cared, she wouldn't have needed that! Her heart would have dictated it—her heart!—without waiting for someone to suggest!

"And a thousand hearts are plunging
To a love they'll never meet,
* * * * *
In the land where the dead dreams go!"

The memory of the song came back to him with a pang of deeper bitterness, a stronger tide of self-pity flowed over his soul, and he turned his face to the wall with a cry of mental anguish and a rush of blurring tears.

And the night deepened, and the darkness thickened, and the slow hours went; and there was not even Ojeebi now to lessen the loneliness and the monotony, or break the stillness with a spoken word.

III

SOMEWHERE in the quiet of the night a clock struck eleven. He turned on his pillow at the sound of it, with the consciousness of having been asleep, the consciousness of being alone yet not alone—as though some other presence were in the room: felt, though unseen—and he swept a searching glance around him.

There was nothing and no one to be seen, however. The lamp still burnt on the table across the room, just as Kit had left it, and what little he could see of the door was sufficient to assure him that it was closed.

A sudden thought came to him. He had told her that he did not wish anybody to sit with him now that Ojeebi had gone, but perhaps she had not taken him at his word. Perhaps she had sent one of the other servants up; perhaps——

"Who's there?" he called out softly, conscious that some presence *was* there. "Don't sit where I can't see you; it makes me nervous."

Nobody answered, nobody stirred.

"Do you hear what I say?" he shouted out irritably. "Who is it?"

This time there *was* a response, but not in words. A sharp, shrill sound—a queer, uncanny sound, that was part a whistle and part a chirp—whipped through the room, and with it a noise like the padding of bare feet in the angle he could not see.

A swift prickle of goose flesh darted up his spine and along the backs of his hands, and fled like finger touches up his temples to his hair. *Some* body was there—some presence—some thing that moved and responded to his outcry in a manner not human; and while he did not for a moment believe in the supernatural——

"Whoever you are—*whatever* you are!—come out of that!" he shouted, twitching his body upwards until it rested on one elbow. "Do you hear me? Come out! Come out, or——"

The sentence ended abruptly in one great, gulping cry of fright and loathing; for, at his call, the padding footsteps slipped nearer, the whistling chirp shrilled out again, and round the angle of the bed, into the glow of the lamplight, moved with a slow, slouching gait, the hunched shoulders, the hairy head and the lithe, lissom body of an Indian ape.

Throughout all his life a congenital antipathy to, a deadly loathing and horror of, all creatures of the monkey family had lain in Lessington's being—implanted there by the mother who bore him—and at the sight of this dreaded creature standing there and making as if to lay a friendly paw upon him, he sent up one loud shout of fright.

Startled by this, and in no wise understanding—for, as might be imagined, it was the creature Ojeebi had alluded to as the pet of the Indian child who lived next door—the ape cleared the space between the bed and the open window in three quick bounds, and, leaping up on the sill, hunched itself there, and looked back with bright, beady eyes at Lessington.

"Take the thing away, somebody!" he shouted out, his voice ragged with fright, his body wet with perspiration. "Help Somebody drive the beast away!"

But nobody answered, nobody appeared;

and the ape, having overcome its first dismay, and being used to human companionship, whistled merrily, swung itself down from the window ledge again, and came slouching back towards the bed.

"Keep back! Keep back!" screeched Lessington. "I'll die if the beast touches me!"

He could not go beyond that thought; the bare idea was so horrifyingly loathsome. The glass of medicine which Ojeebi had prepared before leaving stood on the table beside him. In a panic he caught the thing up, hurled it with all his force at the ape, and in an instant evoked a very pandemonium.

The natural imitativeness of the animal asserted itself at once. It saw the glass crash and splinter against the window ledge, and turning to a loaded cabinet within easy reach, snatched up bit after bit of bric-à-brac, and sent it flying across the room, until, hurtling and twisting as it flew, one heavy vase crashed into the burning lamp, swept it from the table to the floor, and brought it down a wreck. But, as it fell, the split reservoir let the oil within it gush out and meet the blazing wick, and, in the winking of an eye, flame was leaping and gyrating through the silken shade, twisting up the tablecloth and zigzagging across the carpet.

The fire-fright that is born in every animal struck to the heart of the ape as the flame arose. It leaped back to the window, sprang to the sill, scuttled back, as it had come, along the coping to the house next door and—vanished.

But Lessington's fears did not vanish with it; for now a new fear came, a new horror took shape within him, and, with his eyes fixed on the growing patch of flame, he lifted up his voice and shouted "Fire! Fire! Fire!" and called again and again for help, but no one answered, no one came.

A very panic of fright took possession of him—swayed him, shook him, maddened him, strengthened him. As in a delirium—not knowing, not realising, what he did until after he had done it—he gathered all his energies, whipped up all his powers, lurched blindly forward, flung himself from the bed, sprawled face downward on the floor, rose to his elbows, rose to his knees, pulled himself up and then—call it what you will—miracle, mind over matter, the forces of Nature, or the hand of God—a power suddenly created, or the natural outcome of changes that had long been in operation unsuspected—then, reeling and swaying, he got to his feet and—stood!

A great, deep chair piled full of cushions was near. He caught one of them up, beat and dashed it upon the flames until they died down into embers.

He gulped out one half-coherent prayer of thankfulness, then laughed hysterically, and moved aimlessly about with the sheer joy of walking; until his eye, falling on the open window, put other thoughts into his mind, and brought weeds and tares into the new-found rose-fields. He made his way to the sill, bent out over it and looked down.

Shops were below, shops were across the way! Grimy, dejected-looking, with dingy doors and dirty windows, the houses that were once so spick and span, once so stately looking, scowled back at him through the darkness!

"She lied!" he said brokenly. "She lied in this as in other things!" Then he stopped and caught his breath, and leaned heavily against the window frame and—waited. For a step—her step—was coming up the stairs; the hour of her unmasking had come.

A moment passed. The steps came on and halted. The knob turned. The door opened, and across the dim space which lay between them her eyes and his met. She jumped back as though a ghost had risen before her—as though she could not trust her eyes—and leaned against the door-post, panting.

But the shock of surprise was not wholly hers; for the opening of the door, which had let the light from the outer passage stream in and show Lessington this, had shown him other things as well. Shown him a bare and empty hall—without a picture, without an ornament, without even a carpet to relieve the bleak barrenness of it. And the bitterness that gnawed at his heart, the wrath at her treachery that burnt within him, the surprise of this thing, found vent in words.

"Oh, don't be afraid; it is not a ghost, it is I!" he flung out at her, with a mirthless little laugh and a gesture of repudiation. "Things don't always happen, as men's wives would like them to happen, you see; and in spite of your hopes, I am able to get about again."

"Ted!"—she gave a cry of exceeding

happiness and, lurching away from the door-post, almost flung herself across the room—"Ted, my darling, when? How? Dear Heaven! it seems too good to be true!"

"*That* doesn't!" he made answer, flinging out his arm and pointing towards the street. "And you told me that the neighbourhood hadn't changed. You told me that the money didn't count. That it was the man you loved, not his possessions! And you let me stop here, surrounded by purple and fine linen in just one room, with things like that beyond! You fooled me, neglected me, abandoned me, lied to me!"

She stopped short and looked at him, saw in his face the signs of that bitter wrath which burnt within him; gave a low cry of misery and, turning, hurried from the room without a word.

But, as she went, he turned from the window, and went after her.

"Stop!" he called out. "I want to speak with you—I will speak with you. When a man's wife plays him this sort of a trick——" Then his voice dropped off into silence, and, amazed and mystified by the surprises which confronted him on every hand, he pressed breathlessly on.

Through bare halls and down carpetless stairs he followed until he overtook her in a stripped and comfortless room which, but for the wallpaper and the decorations on the ceiling, he would never have recognised for that place which in other days he had known as her boudoir; and, as he came up with her, he found her leaning weak and white against a cheap iron bedstead, with the things he had alluded to to-night as "her diamonds" swinging in chains of light from the clasp of her hand.

"In the name of Heaven, Kit," he began, in a tone of utter bewilderment. But she checked any further word by reaching out the hand that held those flashing things.

"Take them, if you want them," she said. "If you believe I only cared for what you could give me, take them, Ted, and learn the difference. They are only paste imitations. I sold the real ones as I sold every other thing in this house, when the crash came, and to keep your name and your honour clean."

"To keep *what?*" he cried, staring at her, with wrinkled brows and parted lips. "What are you talking about? What do you mean? When the crash came?"

"When the bubble burst," she made reply. "When the Milling and Mining Company failed, and everything we had on earth had to be sacrificed to meet the demands of your creditors!"

"Failed? The Milling and Mining Company failed? Why, I made a fortune out of it—a fortune! And to say that it *failed*—— Are you crazy?"

"Not now; but I was near to it then. You never made anything out of it, Ted, not so much as one penny! The day after your accident the crash came, the scheme fell through, the 'grand coup' changed into a grand disaster; the Milling and Mining Company went out like a pricked bubble, and of all that had come to me through our marriage, dear, I had only *you!* There isn't one servant in the house; there never has been since that dreadful day, because I couldn't afford to keep one, couldn't enter into *any* extravagance if I was to keep you in ignorance of what had happened, and to save the things which surrounded you with a semblance of unlimited wealth."

"Kit!"

"It is true, Ted, every word of it is true! That's why I persuaded you to make over everything to me. That's why I never could offer to return the money when you twitted me with keeping it. There wasn't any to return, dear; it all went to your creditors on the day you made it over to me. We've got nothing left in all the world but just this house—this house which brings us in nothing."

He stared at her in amazement—in trembling—in a fright and wonder that were amazing beyond all words.

"But, Kit!" he said, after a moment, his eyes wide, a fitful colour coming and going over his face. "If we have had no money—if there has never been anything of my providing since then. . . . Kit! Oh, Kit! I—I have had every luxury; it has been purple and fine linen for me all the time—for *me!* How have we lived, then? What and—who—has paid?"

"I have been—singing—in the music-halls!" she made answer, drooping her head, as though she had done some guilty thing. "That's why I had to have the new dresses. That's why I had to go out every night! I hated to do it, but it was the only thing, dear, the only thing! My voice wasn't good enough for anything higher, and something *had* to be done; and—and

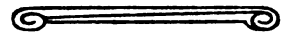
I loved you so well I would have died rather than have you find out!"

A great shame bit into Lessington's soul, but it was not a shame born of what she had done; it was a shame born of what he had thought, what he had said, what he had believed. For a moment it bent and broke him; for a moment he had not the courage to look at her. But when he did look, and saw in her eyes that which only men who are blest of God ever do see in the eyes of women, he put out his arms to her as to a Rock of Refuge.

And she—being only a woman—forgot and forgave, and slipped into them, with a sigh of happiness and content.

"We can begin anew, Teddy Bear," she said, with a happy little laugh. "Nothing matters so that I have you. We can begin anew, dear; and now that 'Richard is himself again,' and you have your brain and your youth and your strength, everything is possible, even the conquest of the world."

"I've *won* the world!" he said, as he bent his head and kissed her, and drew her up close to him and tightened his arms about her.



The Art of Flattery

PEOPLE generally despise where they flatter and cringe to those whom they desire to supersede. MARCUS AURELIUS.

FLATTERY corrupts both the receiver and the giver. BURKE.

FLATTERERS look like friends, as wolves like dogs. CHAPMAN.

EVERY woman is infallibly to be gained by every sort of flattery, and every man by one sort or another. LORD CHESTERFIELD.

WHEN flattery does not succeed, it is not the fault of flattery, but of the flatterer.
PIERRE GASTON.

A FLATTERER can risk everything with great personages. LE SAGE.

IT is possible to be below flattery, as well as above it. MACAULAY.

FACE-FLATTERER and back-biter are the same. TENNYSON.

IF men did not flatter one another there would be scarcely any society. VAUVENARGUES.

COQUETTES, kings, and poets are accustomed to be flattered. VOLTAIRE.

FLATTERY is like bad money, it impoverishes those who receive it. MME. WOILLEZ.

HE only is a great man who can neglect the applause of the multitude, and enjoy himself independent of its favour. STEELE.

THE bad, when praised, become still worse. PHILOSTRATUS.

PRAISE is like ambergris; a little whiff of it, and by snatches, is very agreeable, but when a man holds a whole lump of it to his nose, it is a stink and strikes you down. POPE.

WHEN one is flagging, a little praise is a cordial after all. To-day I have already written four pages with confidence. Thus does flattery or praise oil the wheels. SCOTT.

FLATTER not the rich; neither do thou appear willingly before the great.
THOMAS À KEMPIS.

FLATTERERS are cats that lick before, and scratch behind. GERMAN PROVERB.

The Opened Door

"The debt which cancels all others"

By ANTHONY HOPE

"WE may float for ten minutes," said the Second Officer.

After a pause the passenger remarked:

"I'm glad of it, upon my word I am."

"You're thankful for small mercies," was the retort.

The passenger did not explain. He could not expect the Second Officer, or the rest of them, to sympathise with his point of view, or share the feelings which made him rejoice, not at the respite, but at the doom itself. Those who were not busy getting the women and children into boats, and keeping the ship above water, were cursing the other vessel for steaming away without offering aid, or clutching in bewildered terror at anyone who could tell them how the collision had happened and what hope there was of salvation. The boats were got safely off, laden to their utmost capacity; lifebuoys were handed round and, when they ran short, men tossed up for them, and the losers ransacked the deck for some makeshift substitute. The passenger took no part in the competition or the search. He stood with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his lips, waiting for the ten minutes to wear themselves away. His only grudge against fate lay in those superfluous ten minutes.

Left to himself, he began to think, lighting a cigarette. He had to use a fusee, which was a pity, especially for his last cigarette, but the wind blew fiercely. It was strange how much harm a man could do without being a particularly bad fellow, and what an *impasse* he could get himself into. He had drifted on, and things had fallen out so maliciously that, because of him who hated hurting anybody, women were weeping and children smirched, and an old man hiding an honoured head in shame. He had even been required to be grateful to the man he hated most in the world, because he had not been put in the dock. That stuck in his throat more than all the rest. He had been ready to pay his shot and go to gaol—he would rather have done five years than owed the thanks for escaping them—but in very decency he couldn't insist on going; the trial would have killed the old man. So they had concocted a plan—a chance of a new life, they called it—and shipped him off to the other side of the world with fifty pounds in his pocket—the gift of that enemy. At least he could get rid of the money now; and still smiling, dropped his pocket-book over the side into the great heaving waves. He had always meant it to go there—God forbid he should use it—but he had hardly hoped to go with it. He would follow soon now. The door whose handle he had shrunk from turning had opened of its own accord in a most marvellously convenient way. To throw oneself overboard is a cold-blooded impossible sort of proceeding; the old man and the women would have heard of it, and he really didn't want to give them any more pain. But this catastrophe was—from a selfish point of view—incredibly opportune. Such an exit had the dignity of the inevitable, and left the "new life" an agreeable hypothesis from which he doubted not that much comfort would be sucked by those dear, loving, foolish folk at home. Much "new life" he would have led! But let them think he would. And hurrah for a collision in deep water!

Five minutes gone—and they were deep in the water. The skipper was on the bridge; the engineers had come up and, together with the crew and such of the passengers as had not got away in the boats, were standing ready to jump at the word. Some were praying, some were swearing, most discussing the matter in very much the same tones as they used in speculating about the weather on deck after dinner; but they all kept their eyes on the skipper.

"I shall just," said the passenger, peering over the side, "go straight down. It oughtn't to take long," and he shivered a little. It had just struck him that the

process might be very unpleasant, however satisfactory the result.

¶

THERE was a sudden movement of the deck under him. The skipper seemed to shout, and, waving his arms, began to run down from the bridge. Then everybody jumped. The passenger dropped his finished cigarette, kicked off his deck shoes—a purely instinctive action—and jumped too. "Here goes!" he said.

When he came up again, he found himself swimming strongly. His arms and legs were not asking his leave about it; they were fighting the water as they had been taught, and they promised to make a long bout of it. He had never felt so vigorous. It was great nonsense, prolonging the thing like this. If he had thought of it, he wouldn't have jumped so clear, then he would have been sucked down. He saw heads bobbing here and there about him; one man shrieked aloud and disappeared. It was—less the shrieking—just what he wanted to do. But he couldn't. It was all very well to want to die, but this strong body of his had a word to say to that. Its business was to live, and it meant to live if it could. Well, it had always been a rebellious carcass—that was the cause of a great deal of trouble—and it evidently meant to have its own way for this last time.

And it began to infect him. For the life of him, he couldn't give in now. It was a fight between him and the water. He might have been a brute, and a rogue, and all the other pretty names that had never come as sauce to that wretched fifty pounds, but he had never been a coward or shirked a fight. It was all right—he must be drowned in the end. But he would keep it up as long as he could; he would see it through; and with strong strokes he met and mastered and beat down wave after wave, outlived head after head that sank round him, and saw the old ship herself go under with a mighty pother.

All at once he found himself within reach of a spar. He was getting tired, though full of fight still, and he clutched at it for all the world as though he were in love with life. Hello! There was a boy clinging to it—one of the ship's boys, whom he knew well.

"Get off!" shrieked the boy. "Get off! It's mine."

"All right, Johnny, we'll share it."

"It won't take us. Get off. It's not fair. Oh, it's going under!"

It was. The passenger let go, but kept close to it. It wouldn't bear Johnny and him, but it would bear Johnny alone; it would alone; it would also, probably, bear him alone. And he was getting very tired. Johnny saw his face and, clinging tight, began to cry. The passenger laid hold again. How jolly it was to have something under one's chest! Johnny had had it for a long while. And what's a ship's boy? Besides, it's every man for himself at such a time.

Johnny's end ducked and Johnny's head dipped with it. Johnny came up whimpering piteously, and swore in childish rage at the intruder. He was not a pretty boy, and he looked very ugly when he swore.

"You'll drown us both, you——!" he gasped.

"It would bear me," replied the passenger, "and you shouldn't swear, Johnny."

Johnny blubbered and swore again.

For an instant the passenger, resting as lightly as he could on the spar, watched Johnny's face.

"You've kept afloat some time," he observed, with an approving air. He liked pluck in boys—even ugly whimpering boys. His end went under, and he came up gurgling and spitting. He felt now as if he had no legs at all.

Johnny had stopped swearing, but was blubbering worse than ever.

"Damn it," said the passenger, "haven't I made enough people do that?" And he added, "ta-ta, Johnny," and let go the spar.

His legs were there, after all, and they let him know it. For time unmeasured he battled for the life he was weary of, and would not let himself be pushed through the open door. But at last he crossed its threshold.

Johnny was drowned too. But then the passenger had always protested against his acts being judged by their consequences; and it doesn't seem fair to take it against him both ways.

The Cult of Clothes

APES are apes, though clothed in scarlet. BEN JONSON.

UNIFORMS are often masks. DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

THE person whose clothes are extremely fine I am apt to consider as not being possessed of any superiority of fortune, but resembling those Indians who were found to wear all the gold they have in the world in a bob at the nose. GOLDSMITH.

No man is esteemed for gay garments but by fools and women. SIR W. RALEIGH.

WE sacrifice to dress till household joys and comforts cease. Dress drains the cellar dry and keeps our larder clean. COWPER.

WHEN you would select a wife,
Do not call on Sunday;
If you'd know her as she is,
Better seek on Monday. C. H. SPURGEON.

EAT to please thyself, but dress to please others. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

IN clothes, cheap handsomeness doth hear the bell. GEORGE HERBERT.

THE appearance, what is it without reality? And what were the reality without the appearance? GOETHE.

IN every bone there is marrow, and within every jacket there is a man. SAADI.

So dress and so conduct yourself that persons who have been in your company will not recollect what you had on. REV. JOHN NEWTON.

RAGS, which are the reproach of poverty, are the beggar's robes and graceful insignia of his profession, his tenure, his full dress, the suit in which he is expected to show himself in public. CHARLES LAMB.

THE vanity of loving fine clothes and new fashions, and valuing ourselves by them, is one of the most childish pieces of folly that can be. SIR MATTHEW HALE.

DRESS has a moral effect upon the conduct of mankind. SIR J. BARRINGTON.

FOR gowns, and gloves, and caps, and tippets,
Are beauty's sauces, spice and sippets. HOOD.

EVEN beauty cannot palliate eccentricity. BALZAC.

GIVEN a living man, there will be found clothes for him; he will find himself clothes; but the suit of clothes pretending that it is both clothes and man. CARLYLE.

DRESS deceives us; jewels and gold hide everything; the girl herself is the least part of herself. OVID.

'TIS a *credit* to any good girl to be neat,
But quite a disgrace to be *fine*. ANN and JANE TAYLOR.

A SMART coat is a good letter of introduction. DUTCH PROVERB.

THE only medicine which does women more good than harm is dress. JEAN PAUL.

IT is not every man that can afford to wear a shabby coat. COLTON.

The Trees of Pride

Mystery and queer adventure on the wild Cornish coast

SQUIRE VANE was an elderly schoolboy of English education and Irish extraction. His English education, at one of the great public schools, had preserved his intellect perfectly and permanently at the stage of boyhood. But his Irish extraction subconsciously upset in him the proper solemnity of an old boy, and sometimes gave him back the brighter outlook of a naughty boy. He had a bodily impatience which played tricks with him almost against his will, and had already rendered him rather too radiant a failure in civil and diplomatic service. Thus it is true that compromise is the key of British policy, especially as effecting an impartiality among the religions of India; but Vane's attempt to meet the Moslem half-way by kicking off one boot at the gates of the mosque, was felt not so much to indicate true impartiality as something that could only be called an aggressive indifference. Again, it is true that an English aristocrat can hardly enter fully into the feelings of either party in a quarrel between a Russian Jew and an Orthodox procession carrying relics; but Vane's idea that the procession might carry the Jew as well, himself a venerable and historic relic, was misunderstood on both sides. In short, he was a man who particularly prided himself on having no nonsense about him; with the result that he was always doing nonsensical things. He seemed to be standing on his head merely to prove that he was hard-headed.

He had just finished a hearty breakfast, in the society of his daughter, at a table under a tree in his garden by the Cornish coast. For, having a glorious circulation, he insisted on as many outdoor meals as possible, though spring had barely touched the woods and warmed the seas round that southern extremity of England. His daughter Barbara, a good-looking girl with heavy red hair and a face as grave as one of the garden statues, still sat almost motionless as a statue, when her father rose. A fine tall figure in light clothes, with his white hair and moustache flying backwards rather fiercely from a face that was good-humoured enough, for he carried his very wide Panama hat in his hand, he strode across the terraced garden, down some stone steps flanked with old ornamental urns to a more woodland path fringed with little trees, and so down a zigzag road which descended the craggy cliff to the shore, where he was to meet a guest arriving by boat. A yacht was already in the blue bay, and he could see a boat pulling towards the little paved pier.

And yet in that short walk between the green turf and the yellow sands he was destined to find his hard-headedness provoked into a not unfamiliar phase which the world was inclined to call hot-headedness. The fact was that the Cornish peasantry, who composed his tenantry and domestic establishment, were far from being people with no nonsense about them. There was, alas! a great deal of nonsense about them; with ghosts, witches and traditions as old as Merlin, they seemed to surround him with a fairy ring of nonsense. But the magic circle had one centre; there was one point to which the curving conversation of the rustics always returned. It was a point that always pricked the Squire to exasperation, and even in this short walk he seemed to strike it everywhere.

He paused before descending the steps from the lawn to speak to the gardener about potting some foreign shrubs, and the gardener seemed to be gloomily gratified. in every line of his leathery brown visage, at the chance of indicating that he had formed a low opinion of foreign shrubs.

"We wish you'd get rid of what you've got here, sir," he observed, digging doggedly. "Nothing'll grow right with them here."

"Shrubs!" said the Squire, laughing. "You don't call the peacock trees shrubs, do you? Fine tall trees—you ought to be proud of them."

"Ill weeds grow apace," observed the gardener. "Weeds can grow as houses

By G. K. Chesterton

A most intriguing story written by a master hand in the art of presenting and elucidating unusual and complex problems in human conduct.

when somebody plants them." Then he added: "Him that sowed tares in the Bible, Squire."

"Oh! Blast your—" began the Squire, and then replaced the more apt and alliterative word "Bible" by the general word "superstition." He was himself a robust rationalist, but he went to church to set his tenants an example. Of what, it would have puzzled him to say.

A little way along the lower path by the trees he encountered a wood-cutter, one Martin, who was more explicit, having more of a grievance. His daughter was at that time seriously ill with a fever recently common on that coast, and the Squire, who was a kind-hearted gentleman, would normally have made allowances for low spirits and loss of temper. But he came near to losing his own again when the peasant persisted in connecting his tragedy with the traditional monomania about the foreign trees.

"If she were well enough I'd move her," said the woodcutter, "as we can't move them, I suppose. I'd just like to get my chopper into them and feel 'em come crashing down."

"One would think they were dragons," said Vane.

"And that's about what they look like," replied Martin. "Look at 'em!" The woodman was naturally a rougher and even wilder figure than the gardener. His face also was brown, and looked like an antique parchment, and it was framed in an outlandish arrangement of raven beard and whiskers, which was really a fashion fifty years ago, but might have been five thousand years old or older. Phœnicians, one felt, trading on those strange shores in the morning of the world, might have combed or curled or braided their blue-black hair into some such quaint patterns. For this patch of population was as much a corner of Cornwall as Cornwall is a corner of England; a tragic and unique race, small and inter-related like a Celtic clan. The clan was older than the Vane family, though that was old as county families go. For in many such parts of England it is the aristocrats who are the latest arrivals. It was the sort of racial type that is supposed to be passing, and perhaps has already passed.

The obnoxious objects stood some hundred yards away from the speaker, who waved towards them with his axe; and there was something suggestive in the comparison. That coast, to begin with, stretching towards the sunset, was itself almost as fantastic as a sunset cloud. It was cut out against the emerald or indigo of the sea in graven horns and crescents that might be the cast or mould of some such crested serpents; and, beneath, was pierced and fretted by caves and crevices, as if by the boring of some such titanic worms. Over and above this draconian architecture of the earth a veil of grey woods hung thinner like a vapour; woods which the witchcraft of the sea had, as usual, both blighted and blown out of shape. To the right the trees trailed along the sea-front in a single line, each drawn out in thin wild lines like a caricature. At the other end of their extent they multiplied into a huddle of hunch-backed trees, a wood spreading towards a projecting part of the high coast. It was here that the sight appeared to which so many eyes and minds seemed to be almost automatically turning.

Out of the middle of this low and more or less level wood rose three separate stems that shot up and soared into the sky like a lighthouse out of the waves or a church spire out of the village roofs. They formed a clump of three columns close together, which might well be the mere bifurcation, or rather trifurcation, of one tree, the lower part being lost or sunken in the thick wood around. Everything about them suggested something stranger and more southern than anything even in that last peninsula of Britain which pushes out farthest towards Spain and Africa and the southern stars.

Their leathery leafage had sprouted in advance of the faint mist of yellow-green around them, and it was of another and less natural green, tinged with blue, like the colours of a kingfisher. But one might fancy it the scales of some three-headed dragon towering over a herd of huddled and fleeing cattle.

"I am exceedingly sorry your girl is so unwell," said Vane shortly. "But really ——" and he strode down the steep road with plunging strides.

The boat was already secured to the little stone jetty, and the boatman, a younger shadow of the woodcutter—and, indeed, a nephew of that useful malcontent—saluted his territorial lord with the sullen formality of the family. The Squire acknowledged it casually and had soon forgotten all such things in shaking hands with the visitor who had just come ashore. The visitor was a long, loose man, very lean to be so young, whose long, fine features seemed wholly fitted together of bone and nerve, and seemed somehow to contrast with his hair, that showed in vivid yellow patches upon his hollow temples under the brim of his white holiday hat. He was carefully dressed in exquisite taste, though he had come straight from a considerable sea-voyage; and he carried something in his hand which in his long European travels, and even longer European visits, he had almost forgotten to call a grip-sack.

Mr. Cyprian Paynter was an American who lived in Italy. There was a good deal more to be said about him, for he was a very acute and cultivated gentleman; but those two facts would, perhaps, cover most of the others. Storing his mind like a museum with the wonder of the Old World, but all lit up as by a window with the wonder of the New, he had fallen heir to something of the unique critical position of Ruskin or Pater, and was further famous as a discoverer of minor poets. He was a judicious discoverer, and he did not turn all his minor poets into major prophets. If his geese were swans, they were not all Swans of Avon. He had even incurred the deadly suspicion of classicism by differing from his young friends the Punctuist Poets when they produced versification consisting exclusively of commas and colons. He had a more humane sympathy with the modern flame kindled from the embers of Celtic mythology, and it was in reality the recent appearance of a Cornish poet, a sort of parallel to the new Irish poets, which had brought him on this occasion to Cornwall. He was, indeed, far too well-mannered to allow a host to guess that any pleasure was being sought outside his own hospitality. He had a long-standing invitation from Vane, whom he had met in Cyprus in the latter's days of undiplomatic diplomacy; and Vane was not aware that relations had only been thus renewed after the critic had read "Merlin and Other Verses," by a new writer named John Treherne. Nor did the Squire even begin to realise the much more diplomatic diplomacy by which he had been induced to invite the local bard to lunch on the very day of the American critic's arrival.

Mr. Paynter was still standing with his grip-sack, gazing in a trance of true admiration at the hollowed crags, topped by the grey, grotesque wood, and crested finally by the three fantastic trees.

"It is like being shipwrecked on the coast of fairyland," he said.

"I hope you haven't been shipwrecked much," replied his host, smiling. "I fancy Jake here can look after you very well."

Mr. Paynter looked across at the boatman and smiled also. "I am afraid," he said, "our friend is not quite so enthusiastic for this landscape as I am."

"Oh, the trees, I suppose!" said the Squire wearily.

The boatman was by normal trade a fisherman; but as his house, built of black tarred timber, stood right on the foreshore a few yards from the pier, he was employed in such cases as a sort of ferryman. He was a big, black-browed youth, generally silent, but something seemed now to sting him into speech.

"Well, sir," he said, "everybody knows it's not natural. Everybody knows the sea blights trees and beats them under, when they're only just trees. These things thrive like some unholy great seaweed that don't belong to the land at all. It's like the—the blessed sea-serpent got on shore, Squire, and eating everything up."

"There is some stupid legend," said Squire Vane gruffly. "But come up into the garden; I want to introduce you to my daughter."

When, however, they reached the little table under the tree, the apparently immovable young lady had moved away after all, and it was some time before they came upon the track of her. She had risen,

though languidly, and wandered slowly along the upper path of the terraced garden looking down on the lower path where it ran closer to the main bulk of the little wood by the sea.

Her languor was not a feebleness but rather a fullness of life, like that of a child half-awake; she seemed to stretch herself and enjoy everything without noticing anything. She passed the wood, into the grey huddle of which a single white path vanished through a black hole. Along this part of the terrace ran something like a low rampart or balustrade, embowered with flowers at intervals; and she leaned over it, looking down at another glimpse of the glowing sea behind the clump of trees, and on another irregular path tumbling down to the pier and the boatman's cottage on the beach.

As she gazed, sleepily enough, she saw that a strange figure was very actively climbing the path, apparently coming from the fisherman's cottage; so actively that a moment afterwards it came out between the trees and stood upon the path just below her. It was not only a figure strange to her, but one somewhat strange in itself. It was that of a man still young, and seeming somehow younger than his own clothes, which were not only shabby but antiquated; clothes common enough in texture, yet carried in an uncommon fashion. He wore what was presumably a light waterproof, perhaps through having come off the sea; but it was held at the throat by one button, and hung, sleeves and all, more like a cloak than a coat. He rested one bony hand on a black stick; under the shadow of his broad hat his black hair hung down in a tuft or two. His face, which was swarthy but rather handsome in itself, wore something that may have been a slightly embarrassed smile, but had too much the appearance of a sneer.

Whether this apparition was a tramp or a trespasser, or a friend of some of the fishers or woodcutters, Barbara Vane was quite unable to guess. He removed his hat, still with his unaltered and rather sinister smile, and said civilly: "Excuse me. The Squire asked me to call." Here he caught sight of Martin, the woodman, who was shifting along the path, thinning the thin trees; and the stranger made a familiar salute with one finger.

The girl did not know what to say. "Have you—have you come about cutting the wood?" she asked at last.

"I would I were so honest a man," replied the stranger. "Martin is, I fancy, a distant cousin of mine; we Cornish folk just round here are nearly all related, you know; but I do not cut wood. I do not cut anything, except, perhaps, capers. I am, so to speak, a *jongleur*."

"A what?" asked Barbara.

"A minstrel, shall we say?" answered the new-comer, and looked up at her more steadily. During a rather odd silence their eyes rested on each other. What she saw has been already noted, though by her, at any rate, not in the least understood. What he saw was a decidedly beautiful woman with a statuesque face and hair that shone in the sun like a helmet of copper.

"Do you know," he went on, "that in this old place, hundreds of years ago, a *jongleur* may really have stood where I stand, and a lady may really have looked over that wall and thrown him money?"

"Do you want money?" she asked, all at sea.

"Well," drawled the stranger, "in the sense of lacking it, perhaps, but I fear there is no place now for a minstrel, except a nigger minstrel. I must apologise for not blacking my face."

She laughed a little in her bewilderment, and said: "Well, I hardly think you need do that."

"You think the natives here are dark enough already, perhaps," he observed calmly. "After all, we are aborigines, and are treated as such."

She threw out some desperate remark about the weather or the scenery, and wondered what would happen next.

"The prospect is certainly beautiful," he assented, in the same enigmatic manner. "There is only one thing in it I am doubtful about."

While she stood in silence he slowly lifted his black stick like a long black finger and pointed it at the peacock trees above the wood. And a queer feeling of disquiet fell on the girl, as if he were, by that mere gesture, doing a destructive act and could send a blight upon the garden.

The strained and almost painful silence was broken by the voice of Squire Vane, loud even while it was still distant.

"We couldn't make out where you'd got to, Barbara," he said. "This is my friend, Mr. Cyprian Paynter." The next moment he saw the stranger and stopped, a little puzzled.

It was only Mr. Cyprian Paynter himself who was equal to the situation. He had seen months ago a portrait of the new Cornish poet in some American literary magazine, and he found himself, to his surprise, the introducer instead of the introduced.

"Why, Squire," he said in considerable astonishment, "don't you know Mr. Treherne? I supposed, of course, he was a neighbour."

"Delighted to see you, Mr. Treherne," said the Squire, recovering his manners with a certain genial confusion. "So pleased you were able to come. This is Mr. Paynter—my daughter," and, turning with a certain boisterous embarrassment, he led the way to the table under the tree.

Cyprian Paynter followed, inwardly revolving a puzzle which had taken even his experience by surprise. The American, if intellectually an aristocrat, was still socially and subconsciously a democrat. It had never crossed his mind that the poet should be counted lucky to know the squire and not the squire to know the poet. The honest patronage in Vane's hospitality was something which made Paynter feel he was, after all, an exile in England.

The Squire, anticipating the trial of luncheon with a strange literary man, had dealt with the case tactfully from his own standpoint. County society might have made the guest feel like a fish out of water; and, except for the American critic and the local lawyer and doctor, worthy middle-class people who fitted into the picture, he had kept it as a family party. He was a widower, and when the meal had been laid out on the garden table, it was Barbara who presided as hostess. She had the new poet on her right hand, and it made her very uncomfortable. She had practically offered that fallacious *jongleur* money, and it did not make it easier to offer him lunch.

"The whole countryside's gone mad," announced the Squire, by way of the latest local news. "It's about this infernal legend of ours."

"I collect legends," said Paynter, smiling. "You must remember I haven't yet had a chance to collect yours. And this," he added, looking round at the romantic coast, "is a fine theatre for anything dramatic."

"Oh, it's dramatic in its way," admitted Vane, not without a faint satisfaction. "It's all about those things over there we call the peacock trees—I suppose, because of the queer colour of the leaf, you know, though I have heard they make a shrill noise in a high wind that's supposed to be like the shriek of a peacock; something like a bamboo in the botanical structure, perhaps. Well, those trees are supposed to have been brought over from Barbary by my ancestor Sir Walter Vane, one of the Elizabethan patriots or pirates, or whatever you call them. They say that at the end of his last voyage the villagers gathered on the beach down there and saw the boat standing in from the sea, and the new trees stood up in the boat like a mast, all gay with leaves out of season, like green bunting. And as they watched they thought at first that the boat was steering oddly, and then that it wasn't steering at all; and when it drifted to the shore at last every man in that boat was dead, and Sir Walter Vane, with his sword drawn, was leaning up against the tree trunk, as stiff as the tree."

"Now this is rather curious," remarked Paynter thoughtfully. "I told you I collected legends, and I fancy I can tell you the beginning of the story of which that is the end, though it comes hundreds of miles across the sea."

He tapped meditatively on the table with his thin, taper fingers, like a man trying to recall a tune. He had, indeed, made a hobby of such fables, and he was not without vanity about his artistic touch in telling them.

"Oh, do tell us your part of it!" cried Barbara Vane, whose air of sunny sleepiness seemed in some vague degree to have fallen from her.

The American bowed across the table with a serious politeness, and then began playing idly with a quaint ring on his long finger as he talked.

¶

"IF you go down to the Barbary Coast, where the last wedge of the forest narrows down between the desert and the great tideless sea, you will find the natives still telling a strange story about a saint of the Dark Ages. There, on the twilight border of the Dark Continent, you feel the Dark Ages. I have only visited the place once, though it lies, so to speak, opposite to the Italian city where I lived for years, and yet you would hardly believe how the topsy-turvydom and transmigration of this myth somehow seemed less mad than they really are, with the wood loud with lions at night

and that dark red solitude beyond. They say that the hermit St. Securis, living there among trees, grew to love them like companions; since, though great giants with many arms like Briareus, they were the mildest and most blameless of the creatures; they did not devour like the lions, but rather opened their arms to all the little birds. And he prayed that they might be loosened from time to time to walk like other things. And the trees were moved upon the prayers of Securis, as they were at the songs of Orpheus. The men of the desert were stricken from afar with fear, seeing the saint walking with a walking grove, like a schoolmaster with his boys. For the trees were thus freed under strict conditions of discipline. They were to return at the sound of the hermit's bell, and, above all, to copy the wild beasts in walking only—to destroy and devour nothing. Well, it is said that one of the trees heard a voice that was not the saint's; that in the warm green twilight of one summer evening it became conscious of something sitting and speaking in its branches in the guise of a great bird, and it was that which once spoke from a tree in guise of a great serpent. As the voice grew louder among its murmuring leaves the tree was torn with a great desire to stretch out and snatch at the birds that flew harmlessly about their nests, and pluck them to pieces. Finally, the tempter filled the tree-top with his own birds of pride, the starry pageant of the peacocks. And the spirit of the brute overcame the spirit of the tree, and it rent and consumed the blue-green birds till not a plume was left, and returned to the quiet tribe of trees. But they say that when spring came all the other trees put forth leaves, but this put forth feathers, feathers of a strange hue and pattern. And by that monstrous assimilation the saint knew of the sin, and he rooted that one tree to the earth with a judgment, so that evil should fall on any who removed it again. That, Squire, is the beginning in the deserts of the tale that ended here, almost in this garden."

"And the end is about as reliable as the beginning, I should say," said Vane. "Yours is a nice plain tale for a small tea-party; a quiet little bit of still-life, that is."

"What a queer, horrible story," exclaimed Barbara. "It makes one feel like a cannibal."

"*Ex Africa*," said the lawyer, smiling. "It comes from a cannibal country. I think it's the touch of the tar-brush, that nightmare feeling that you don't know whether the hero is a plant or a man, or a devil. Don't you feel it sometimes in 'Uncle Remus'?"

"True," said Paynter. "Perfectly true." And he looked at the lawyer with a new interest. The lawyer, who had been introduced as Mr. Ashe, was one of those people who are more worth looking at than most people realise when they look. If Napoleon had been red-haired, and had bent all his powers with a curious contentment upon the petty lawsuits of a province, he might have looked much the same; the head with the red hair was heavy and powerful; the figure in its dark, quiet clothes was comparatively insignificant, as was Napoleon's. He seemed more at ease in the Squire's society than the doctor, who, though a gentleman, was a shy one, and a mere shadow of his professional brother.

"As you truly say," remarked Paynter, "the story seems touched with quite barbarous elements, probably negro. Originally, though I think there was really a hagiological story about some hermit, though some of the higher critics say St. Securis never existed, but was only an allegory of arboriculture, since his name is the Latin for an axe."

"Oh, if you come to that," remarked the poet Treherne, "you might as well say Squire Vane doesn't exist, and that he's only an allegory for a weathercock." Something a shade too cool about this sally drew the lawyer's red brows together. He looked across the table and met the poet's smile.

"Do I understand, Mr. Treherne," asked Ashe, "that you support the miraculous claims of St. Securis in this case. Do you, by any chance, believe in the walking trees?"

"I see men as trees walking," answered the poet, "like the man cured of blindness in the Gospel. By the way, do I understand that you support the miraculous claims of that—thaumaturgist?"

Paynter intervened swiftly and suavely. "Now that sounds a fascinating piece of psychology. You see men as trees?"

"As I can't imagine why men should walk, I can't imagine why trees shouldn't," answered Treherne.

"Obviously, it is the nature of the organism," interposed the medical guest, Dr. Burton Brown; "it is necessary in the very type of vegetable structure."

" In other words, a tree sticks in the mud from year's end to year's end," answered Treherne. " So do you stop in your consulting-room from ten to eleven every day. And don't you fancy a fairy, looking in at your window for a flash after having just jumped over the moon and played mulberry bush with the Pleiades, would think you were a vegetable structure, and that sitting still was the nature of the organism ? "

" I don't happen to believe in fairies;" said the doctor rather stiffly, for the *argumentum ad hominem* was becoming too common. A sulphurous subconscious anger seemed to radiate from the dark poet.

" Well, I should hope not, Doctor," began the Squire, in his loud and friendly style, and then stopped, seeing the other's attention arrested. The silent butler waiting on the guests had appeared behind the doctor's chair, and was saying something in the low, level tones of the well-trained servant. He was so smooth a specimen of the type that others never noticed, at first, that he also repeated the dark portrait, however varnished, so common in this particular family of Cornish Celts. His face was sallow and even yellow, and his hair indigo black. He went by the name of Miles. Some felt oppressed by the tribal type in this tiny corner of England. They felt somehow as if all these dark faces were the masks of a secret society.

The doctor rose with a half-apology. " I must ask pardon for disturbing this pleasant party ; I am called away on duty. Please don't let anybody move. We have to be ready for these things, you know. Perhaps Mr. Treherne will admit that my habits are not so very vegetable, after all." With this Parthian shaft, at which there was some laughter, he strode away very rapidly across the sunny lawn to where the road dipped down towards the village.

" He is very good among the poor," said the girl with an honourable seriousness.

" A capital fellow," agreed the Squire. " Where is Miles ? You will have a cigar, Mr. Treherne ? " And he got up from the table ; the rest followed, and the group broke up on the lawn.

" Remarkable man, Treherne," said the American to the lawyer conversationally.

" Remarkable is the word," assented Ashe rather grimly. " But I don't think I'll make any remark about him."

The Squire, too impatient to wait for the yellow-faced Miles, had betaken himself indoors for the cigars, and Barbara found herself once more paired off with the poet, as she floated along the terrace garden ; but this time, symbolically enough, upon the same level of lawn. Mr. Treherne looked less eccentric after having shed his curious cloak, and seemed a quieter and more casual figure.

" I didn't mean to be rude to you just now," she said abruptly.

" And that's the worst of it," replied the man of letters, " for I'm horribly afraid I did mean to be rude to you. When I looked up and saw you up there something surged up in me that was in all the revolutions of history. Oh, there was admiration in it, too ! Perhaps there was idolatry in all the iconoclasts."

He seemed to have a power of reaching rather intimate conversation in one silent and cat-like bound, as he had scaled the steep road, and it made her feel him to be dangerous, and perhaps unscrupulous. She changed the subject sharply, not without a movement towards gratifying her own curiosity.

" What *did* you mean by all that about walking trees ? " she asked. " Don't tell me you really believe in a magic tree that eats birds ! "

" I should probably surprise you," said Treherne gravely, " more by what I don't believe than by what I do." Then, after a pause, he made a general gesture towards the house and garden. " I'm afraid I don't believe in all this ; for instance, in Elizabethan houses and Elizabethan families and the way estates have been improved and the rest of it. Look at our friend the woodcutter now." And he pointed to the man with the quaint black beard, who was still plying his axe upon the timber below.

" That man's family goes back for ages, and it was far richer and freer in what you call the Dark Ages than it is now. Wait till the Cornish peasant writes a history of Cornwall."

" But what in the world," she demanded, " has this to do with whether you believe in a tree eating birds ? "

"Why should I confess what I believe in ? " he said, a muffled drum of mutiny in his voice. " The gentry came here and took our land and took our labour and took our customs. And now, after exploitation, a viler thing, education ! They must take our dreams ! "

"Well, this dream was rather a nightmare, wasn't it?" asked Barbara, smiling; and the next moment grew quite grave, saying almost anxiously: "But here's Doctor Brown back again. Why, he looks quite upset."

The doctor, a black figure in the green lawn, was, indeed, coming towards them at a very vigorous walk. His body and gait were much younger than his face, which seemed prematurely lined as with worry; his brow was bald, and projected from the straight, dark hair behind it. He was visibly paler than when he left the lunch table.

"I am sorry to say, Miss Vane," he said, "that I am the bearer of bad news to poor Martin, the woodman here. His daughter died half an hour ago."

"Oh," cried Barbara warmly, "I am *so* sorry!"

"So am I," said the doctor, and passed on rather abruptly; he ran down the stone steps between the stone urns; and they saw him in talk with the woodcutter. They could not see the woodcutter's face. He stood with his back to them, but they saw something that seemed more moving than any change of countenance. The man's hand holding the axe rose high above his head, and for a flash it seemed as if he would have cut down the doctor. But in fact he was not looking at the doctor. His face was set towards the cliff, where, sheer out of the dwarf forest, rose, gigantic and gilded by the sun, the trees of pride.

The strong brown hand made a movement and was empty. The axe went circling swiftly through the air, its head showing like a silver crescent against the grey twilight of the trees. It did not reach its tall objective, but fell among the undergrowth, shaking up a flying litter of birds. But in the poet's memory, full of primal things, something seemed to say that he had seen the birds of some pagan augury, the axe of some pagan sacrifice.

A moment after the man made a heavy movement forward, as if to recover his tool; but the doctor put a hand on his arm.

"Never mind that now," they heard him say sadly and kindly. "The Squire will excuse you any more work, I know."

Something made the girl look at Treherne. He stood gazing, his head a little bent, and one of his black elf-locks had fallen forward over his forehead. And again she had the sense of a shadow over the grass; she almost felt as if the grass were a host of fairies, and that the fairies were not her friends.

II

THE WAGER OF SQUIRE VANE

IT was more than a month before the legend of the peacock trees was again discussed in the Squire's circle. It fell out one evening, when his eccentric taste for meals in the garden had gathered the company round the same table, now lit with a lamp and laid out for dinner in a glowing spring twilight. It was even the same company, for in the few weeks intervening they had insensibly grown more and more into each other's lives, forming a little group like a club. The American æsthete was of course the most active agent, his resolution to pluck out the heart of the Cornish poet's mystery leading him again and again to influence his flighty host for such reunions. Even Mr. Ashe, the lawyer, seemed to have swallowed his half-humorous prejudices; and the doctor, though a rather sad and silent, was a companionable and considerate man. Paynter had even read Treherne's poetry aloud, and he read admirably; he had also read other things, not aloud, grubbing up everything in the neighbourhood, from guide-books to epitaphs, that could throw a light on local antiquities. And it was that evening when the lamplight and the last daylight had kindled the colours of the wine and silver on the table under the tree, that he announced a new discovery.

"Say, Squire," he remarked, with one of his rare Americanisms, "about those bogey trees of yours; I don't believe you know half the tales told around here about them. It seems they have a way of eating things. Not that I have any ethical objection to eating things," he conceded, helping himself elegantly to green cheese. "But I have more or less, broadly speaking, an objection to eating people."

"Eating people!" repeated Barbara Vane.

"I know a globe-trotter mustn't be fastidious," replied Mr. Paynter. "But I repeat firmly, an objection to eating people. The peacock trees seem to have progressed since the happy days of innocence when they only ate peacocks. If you ask the people here—the fisherman who lives on that beach, or the man that mows this very

lawn in front of us—they'll tell you tales taller than any tropical one I brought you from the Barbary Coast. If you ask them what happened to the fisherman Peters, who got drunk on All Hallows Eve, they'll tell you he lost his way in that little wood, tumbled down asleep under the wicked trees, and then—evaporated, vanished, was licked up like dew by the sun. If you ask them where Harry Hawke is, the widow's little son, they'll just tell you he's swallowed; that he was dared to climb the trees and sit there all night, and did it. What the trees did God knows; the habits of a vegetable ogre leave one a little vague. But they even add the agreeable detail that a new branch appears on the tree when somebody has petered out in this style."

"What new nonsense is this?" cried Vane. "I know there's some crazy yarn about the trees spreading fever, though every educated man knows why these epidemics return occasionally. And I know they say you can tell the noise of them among other trees in a gale, and I dare say you can. But even Cornwall isn't a lunatic asylum, and a tree that dines on a passing tourist——"

"Well, the two tales are reconcilable enough," put in the poet quietly. "If there were a magic that killed men when they came close, it's likely to strike them with sickness when they stand far off. In the old romance the dragon, that devours some people, often blasts others with a sort of poisonous breath."

Ashe looked across at the speaker steadily, not to say stonily.

"Do I understand," he inquired, "that you swallow the swallowing trees too?"

Treherne's dark smile was still on the defensive; his fencing always annoyed the other, and he seemed not without malice in the matter.

"Swallowing is a metaphor," he said, "about me, if not about the trees. And metaphors take us at once into dreamland—no bad place, either. This garden, I think, gets more and more like a dream at this corner of the day and night, that might lead us anywhere."

The yellow horn of the moon had appeared silently and as if suddenly over the black horns of the seawood, seeming to announce as night something which till then had been evening. A night breeze came in between the trees and raced stealthily across the turf, and as they ceased speaking they heard, not only the seething grass, but the sea itself move and sound in all the cracks and caves round them and below them and on every side. They all felt the note that had been struck—the American as an art critic and the poet as a poet; and the Squire, who believed himself boiling with an impatience purely rational, did not really understand his own impatience. In him, more perhaps than the others—more certainly than he knew himself—the sea-wind went to the head like wine.

"Credulity is a curious thing," went on Treherne in a low voice. "It is more negative than positive, and yet it is finite. Hundreds of men will avoid walking under a ladder; they don't know where the door of the ladder will lead. They don't really think God would throw a thunderbolt at them for such a thing. They don't know what would happen, that is just the point; but yet they step aside as from a precipice. So the poor people here may or may not believe anything; they don't go into those trees at night."

"I walk under a ladder whenever I can," cried Vane, in quite unnecessary excitement.

"You belong to a Thirteen Club," said the poet. "You walk under a ladder on Friday to dine thirteen at a table, everybody spilling the salt. But even you don't go into those trees at night."

Squire Vane stood up, his silver hair flaming in the wind.

"I'll stop all night in your tom-fool wood and up your tom-fool trees," he said. "I'll do it for twopence or two thousand pounds, if anyone will take the bet."

Without waiting for reply, he snatched up his wide white hat and settled it on with a fierce gesture, and had gone off in great leonine strides across the lawn before anyone at the table could move.

The stillness was broken by Miles, the butler, who dropped and broke one of the plates he carried. He stood looking after his master with his long, angular chin thrust out, looking yellower where it caught the yellow light of the lamp below. His face was thus sharply in shadow, but Paynter fancied for a moment it was convulsed by some passion passing surprise. But the face was quite as usual when it turned, and Paynter realised that a night of fancies had begun, like the cross purposes of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The wood of the strange trees, towards which the Squire was walking, lay so far

forward on the headland, which ultimately almost overhung the sea, that it could be approached by only one path, which shone clearly like a silver ribbon in the twilight. The ribbon ran along the edge of the cliff, where the single row of deformed trees ran beside it all the way, and eventually plunged into the closer mass of trees by one natural gateway, a mere gap in the wood, looking dark, like a lion's mouth. What became of the path inside could not be seen, but it doubtless led round the hidden roots of the great central trees. The Squire was already within a yard or two of this dark entry when his daughter rose from the table and took a step or two after him as if to call him back.

Treherne had also risen, and stood as if dazed at the effect of his idle defiance. When Barbara moved he seemed to recover himself, and stepping after her, said something which Paynter did not hear. He said it casually and even distantly enough, but it clearly suggested something to her mind; for, after a moment's thought, she nodded and walked back, not towards the table, but apparently towards the house. Paynter looked after her with a momentary curiosity, and when he turned again the Squire had vanished into the hole in the wood.

"He's gone," said Treherne, with a clang of finality in his tones, like the slamming of a door.

"Well, suppose he has?" cried the lawyer, roused at the voice. "The Squire can go into his own wood, I suppose! What the devil's all the fuss about, Mr. Paynter? Don't tell me *you* think there's any harm in that plantation of sticks."

"No, I don't," said Paynter, throwing one leg over another and lighting a cigar. "But I shall stop here till he comes out."

"Very well," said Ashe shortly, "I'll stop with you, if only to see the end of this farce."

The doctor said nothing, but he also kept his seat and accepted one of the American's cigars. If Treherne had been attending to the matter he might have noted, with his sardonic superstition, a curious fact—that, while all three men were tacitly condemning themselves to stay out all night if necessary, all, by one blank of omission or oblivion, assumed that it was impossible to follow their host into the wood just in front of them. But Treherne, though still in the garden, had wandered away from the garden-table, and was pacing along the single line of trees against the dark sea. They had in their regular interstices, showing the sea as through a series of windows, something of the look of the ghost or skeleton of a cloister, and he, having thrown his coat once more over his neck, like a cape, passed to and fro like the ghost of some not very sane monk.

All these men, whether sceptics or mystics, looked back for the rest of their lives on that night as on something unnatural. They sat still or started up abruptly, and paced the great garden in long detours, so that it seemed that no three of them were together at a time, and none knew who would be his companion; yet their rambling remained within the same dim and mazy space. They fell into snatches of uneasy slumber; these were very brief, and yet they felt as if the whole sitting, strolling, or occasional speaking had been parts of a single dream.

Paynter woke once, and found Ashe sitting opposite him at a table otherwise empty; his face dark in shadow and his cigar-end like the red eye of a Cyclops. Until the lawyer spoke, in his steady voice, Paynter was positively afraid of him. He answered at random and nodded again; when he again woke the lawyer was gone, and what was opposite him was the bald, pale brow of the doctor; there seemed suddenly something ominous in the familiar fact that he wore spectacles. And yet the vanishing Ashe had only vanished a few yards away, for he turned at that instant and strolled back to the table. With a jerk Paynter realised that his nightmare was but a trick of sleep or sleeplessness, and spoke in his natural voice, but rather loud.

"So you've joined us again; where's Treherne?"

"Oh, still revolving, I suppose, like a polar bear under those trees on the cliff," replied Ashe, motioning with his cigar, "looking at what an older (and you will forgive me for thinking a somewhat better) poet called the wine-dark sea. It really has a sort of purple shade; look at it."

Paynter looked; he saw the wine-dark sea and the fantastic trees that fringed it, but he did not see the poet; the cloister was already emptied of its restless monk.

"Gone somewhere else," he said, with futility far from characteristic. "He'll be back here presently. This is an interesting vigil, but a vigil loses some of its intensity when you can't keep awake. Ah! Here's

Treherne; so we're all mustered, as the politician said when Mr. Colman came late for dinner. No, the doctor's off again; how restless we all are!" The poet had drawn near, his feet were falling soft on the grass and he was gazing at them with a singular attentiveness.

"It will soon be over," he said.

"What?" snapped Ashe very abruptly.

"The night, of course," replied Treherne in a motionless manner. "The darkest hour has passed."

"Didn't some other minor poet remark," inquired Paynter flippantly, "that the darkest hour before the dawn—? My God, what was that? It was like a scream."

"It was a scream," replied the poet. "The scream of a peacock."

Ashe stood up, his strong face pale against his red hair, and said furiously: "What the devil do you mean?"

"Oh, perfectly natural causes, as Dr. Brown would say," replied Treherne. "Didn't the Squire tell us the trees had a shrill note of their own when the wind blew? The wind's beating up again from the sea; I shouldn't wonder if there was a storm before dawn."

Dawn indeed came gradually with a growing noise of wind, and the purple sea began to boil about the dark volcanic cliffs. The first change in the sky showed itself only in the shapes of the wood and the single stems growing darker but clearer; and above the grey clump, against a glimpse of growing light, they saw aloft the evil trinity of the trees. In their long lines there seemed to Paynter something faintly serpentine and even spiral. He could almost fancy he saw them slowly revolving as in some cyclic dance, but this, again, was but a last delusion of dreamland, for a few seconds later he was again asleep. In dreams he toiled through a tangle of inconclusive tales, each filled with the same stress and noise of sea and sea-wind; and above and outside all other voices, the wailing of the Trees of Pride.

¶

WHEN he woke it was broad day, and a bloom of early light lay on wood and garden and on fields and farms for miles away. The comparative common sense that daylight brings even to the sleepless drew him alertly to his feet, and showed him all his companions standing about the lawn in similar attitudes of expectancy. There was no need to ask what they were expecting. They were waiting to hear the nocturnal experiences, comic or commonplace or whatever they might prove to be, of that eccentric friend, whose experiment (whether from some subconscious fear or some fancy of honour) they had not ventured to interrupt. Hour followed hour, and still nothing stirred in the wood save an occasional bird. The Squire, like most men of his type, was an early riser, and it was not likely that he would in this case sleep late; it was much more likely, in the excitement in which he had left them, that he would not sleep at all. Yet it was clear that he must be sleeping, perhaps by some reaction from a strain. By the time the sun was high in heaven Ashe the lawyer, turning to the others, spoke abruptly and to the point.

"Shall we go into the wood now?" asked Paynter, and almost seemed to hesitate.

"I will go in," said Treherne simply. Then, drawing up his dark head in answer to their glances, he added:

"Oh, do not trouble yourselves. It is never the believer who is afraid."

For the second time they saw a man mount the white curling path and disappear into the grey tangled wood, but this time they did not have to wait long to see him again.

A few minutes later he reappeared in the woodland gateway, and came slowly towards them across the grass. He stopped before the doctor, who stood nearest, and said something. It was repeated to the others, and went round the ring with low cries of incredulity. The others plunged into the wood and returned wildly, and were seen speaking to others again who gathered from the house; the wild wireless telegraphy which is the education of countryside communities spread it farther and farther before the fact itself was fully realised; and before nightfall a quarter of the country knew that Squire Vane had vanished like a burst bubble.

Widely as the wild story was repeated, and patiently as it was pondered, it was long before there was even the beginning of a sequel to it. In the interval Paynter had politely removed himself from the house of mourning, or rather of questioning, but only so far as the village inn; for Barbara Vane was glad of the traveller's experience and sympathy, in addition to that afforded her by the lawyer and doctor as old friends

of the family. Even Treherne was not discouraged from his occasional visits with a view to helping the hunt for the lost man. The five held many counsels round the old garden table, at which the unhappy master of the house had dined for the last time; and Barbara wore her old mask of stone, if it was now a more tragic mask. She had shown no passion after the first morning of discovery, when she had broken forth once, speaking strangely enough in the view of some of her hearers.

She had come slowly out of the house, to which her own or someone else's wisdom had relegated her during the night of the wager; and it was clear from her face that somebody had told her the truth; Miles, the butler, stood on the steps behind her; and it was probably he.

"Do not be much distressed, Miss Vane," said Dr. Brown, in a low and rather uncertain voice. "The search in the wood has hardly begun. I am convinced we shall find—something quite simple."

"The doctor is right," said Ashe, in his firm tones; "I myself——"

"The doctor is not right," said the girl, turning a white face on the speaker, "I know better. The poet is right. The poet is always right. Oh, he has been here from the beginning of the world, and seen wonders and terrors that are all round our path, and only hiding behind a bush or a stone. You and your doctoring and your science—why, you have only been here for a few fumbling generations; and you can't conquer even your own enemies of the flesh. Oh, forgive me, Doctor, I know you do splendidly; but the fever comes in the village, and the people die and die for all that. And now it's my poor father. God help us all! The only thing left is to believe in God; for we can't help believing in devils." And she left them, still walking quite slowly, but in such a fashion that no one could go after her.

The spring had already begun to ripen into summer, and spread a green tent from the tree over the garden table, when the American visitor, sitting there with his two professional companions, broke the silence by saying what had long been in his mind.

"Well," he said, "I suppose whatever we may think it wise to say, we have all begun to think of a possible conclusion. It can't be put very delicately anyhow; but, after all, there's a very necessary business side to it. What are we going to do about poor Vane's affairs, apart from himself? I suppose you know," he added, in a low voice to the lawyer, "whether he made a will?"

"He left everything to his daughter unconditionally," replied Ashe. "But nothing can be done with it. There's no proof whatever that he's dead."

"No legal proof?" remarked Paynter dryly.

A wrinkle of irritation had appeared in the big bald brow of Dr. Brown; and he made an impatient movement.

"Of course he's dead," he said. "What's the sense of all this legal fuss? We were watching this side of the wood, weren't we? A man couldn't have flown off those high cliffs over the sea; he could only have fallen off. What else can he be but dead?"

"I speak as a lawyer," returned Ashe, raising his eyebrows. "We can't presume his death, or have an inquest or anything till we find the poor fellow's body, or some remains that may reasonably be presumed to be his body."

"I see," observed Paynter quietly. "You speak as a lawyer; but I don't think it's very hard to guess what you think as a man."

"I own I'd rather be a man than a lawyer," said the doctor, rather roughly. "I'd no notion the law was such an ass. What's the good of keeping the poor girl out of her property, and the estate all going to pieces? Well, I must be off, or my patients will be going to pieces too."

And with a curt salutation he pursued his path down to the village.

"That man does his duty, if anybody does," remarked Paynter. "We must pardon his—shall I say manners or manner?"

"Oh, I bear him no malice," replied Ashe good-humouredly, "but I'm glad he's gone, because—well, because I don't want him to know yet how jolly right he is." And he leaned back in his chair and stared up at the roof of green leaves.

"You are sure," said Paynter, looking at the table, "that Squire Vane is dead?"

"More than that," said Ashe, still staring at the leaves. "I'm sure of how he died."

"Ah!" said the American, with an intake of breath, and they remained for a moment, one gazing at the tree and the other at the table.

"Sure is perhaps too strong a word," continued Ashe. "But my conviction will

want some shaking. I don't envy the counsel for the defence."

"The counsel for the defence," repeated Paynter, and looked up quickly at his companion. He was struck again by the man's Napoleonic chin and jaw, as he had been when they first talked of the legend of St. Securis.

"Then," he began. "You don't think the trees——"

"The trees be damned!" snorted the lawyer. "The tree had two legs on that evening. What our friend the poet," he added, with a sneer, "would call a walking tree. Apropos of our friend the poet, you seemed surprised that night to find he was not walking poetically by the sea all the time, and I fear I affected to share your ignorance. I was not so sure then as I am now."

"Sure of what?" demanded the other.

"To begin with," said Ashe, "I'm sure our friend the poet followed Vane into the wood that night, for I saw him coming out again."

Paynter leaned forward, suddenly pale with excitement, and struck the wooden table so that it rattled.

"Mr. Ashe, you're wrong," he cried. "You're a wonderful man and you're wrong. You've probably got tons of true convincing evidence, and you're wrong. I know this poet; I know him as a poet; and that's just what you don't. I know you think he gave you crooked answers, and seemed to be all smiles and black looks at once; but you don't understand the type. I know now why you don't understand the Irish. Sometimes you think it's soft, and sometimes sly, and sometimes murderous and sometimes uncivilised; and all the time it's only civilised; quivering with the sensitive irony of understanding all that you don't understand."

"Well," said Ashe shortly, "we'll see who's right."

"We will," cried Cyprian, and rose suddenly from the table. All the drooping of the æsthete had dropped from him; his Yankee accent rose high, like a horn of defiance, and there was nothing about him but the New World.

"I guess I will look into this myself," he said, stretching his long limbs like an athlete. "I search that little wood of yours to-morrow. It's a bit late, or I'd do it now."

"The wood has been searched," said the lawyer, rising also.

"Yes," drawled the American. "It's been searched by servants, policemen, local policeman, and quite a lot of people; and do you know I have a notion that nobody round here is likely to have searched it at all."

"And what are you going to do with it?" asked Ashe.

"What I bet they haven't done," replied Cyprian. "I'm going to climb a tree."

And with a quaint air of renewed cheerfulness he took himself away at a rapid walk to his inn.

¶

HE appeared at daybreak next morning outside the Vane Arms with the air of one setting out on his travels in distant lands. He had a field-glass slung over his shoulder, and a very large sheath-knife buckled by a belt round his waist, and carried with the cool bravado of the bowie-knife of a cowboy. But in spite of this backwoodsman's simplicity, or perhaps rather because of it, he eyed with rising relish the picturesque plan and skyline of the antiquated village, and especially the wooden square of the old inn-sign that hung over his head; a shield, of which the charges seemed to him a mere medley of blue dolphins, gold crosses and scarlet birds. The colours and cubic corners of that painted board pleased him like a play or a puppet-show. He stood staring and straddling for some moments on the cobbles of the little market-place; then he gave a short laugh and began to mount the steep streets towards the high park and garden beyond. From the high lawn, above the tree and table, he could see on one side the land stretch away past the house into a great rolling plain, which under the clear edges of the dawn seemed dotted with picturesque details. The woods here and there on the plain looked like green hedgehogs, as grotesque as the incongruous beasts found unaccountably walking in the blank spaces of mediæval maps. The land, cut up into coloured fields, recalled the heraldry of the signboard; this also was at once ancient and gay. On the other side the ground to seaward swept down and then up again to the famous or infamous wood; the square of strange trees lay silently tilted on the slope, also suggesting, if not a map, at least a bird's-eye view. Only the triple centrepiece of the peacock trees rose clear of the sky-line; and these stood up in tranquil sunlight as things almost classical, a triangular temple of the winds. They

seemed pagan in a newer and more placid sense; and he felt a newer and more boyish curiosity and courage for the consulting of the oracle. In all his wanderings he had never walked so lightly, for the connoisseur of sensations had found something to do at last; he was fighting for a friend.

He was brought to a standstill once, however, and that at the very gateway of the garden of the trees of knowledge. Just outside the black entry of the wood, now curtained with greener and larger leafage, he came on a solitary figure. It was Martin, the woodcutter, wading in the bracken and looking about him in rather a lost fashion. The man seemed to be talking to himself.

"I dropt it here," he was saying. "But I'll never work with it again I reckon. Doctor wouldn't let me pick it up, when I wanted to pick it up; and now they've got it, like they've got the Squire. Wood and iron, wood and iron, but eating it's nothing to them."

"Come!" said Paynter kindly, remembering the man's domestic trouble. "Miss Vane will see you have anything you want, I know. And look here, don't brood on all those stories about the Squire. Is there the slightest trace of the trees having anything to do with it? Is there even this extra branch the idiots talked about?"

There had been growing on Paynter the suspicion that the man before him was not perfectly sane; yet he was much more startled by the sudden and cold sanity that looked for an instant out of the woodman's eyes, as he answered in his ordinary manner.

"Well, sir, did you count the branches before?"

Then he seemed to relapse; and Paynter left him wandering and wavering in the undergrowth; and entered the wood like one across whose sunny path a shadow has fallen for an instant.

Diving under the wood, he was soon threading a leafy path which, even under that summer sun, shone only with an emerald twilight, as if it were on the floor of the sea. It wound about more shakily than he had supposed, as if resolved to approach the central trees as if they were the heart of the maze at Hampton Court. They were the heart of the maze for him, anyhow; he sought them as straight as a crooked road would carry him; and, turning a final corner, he beheld for the first time the foundations of those towers of vegetation he had as yet only seen from above, as they stood waist-high in the woodland. He found the suspicion correct which supposed that three branched from one great root, like a candelabrum; the fork, though stained and slimy with green fungoids, was quite near the ground, and offered a first foothold. He put his foot in it, and without a flash of hesitation went aloft, like Jack climbing the Beanstalk.

Above him the green roof of leaves and boughs seemed sealed like a firmament of foliage; but, by bending and breaking the branches to right and left he slowly forced a passage upwards; and had at last, and suddenly, the sensation of coming out on the top of the world. He felt as if he had never been in the open air before. Sea and land lay in a circle below and about him, as he sat astride a branch of the tall tree; he was almost surprised to see the sun still comparatively low in the sky; as if he were looking over a land of eternal sunrise.

"Silent upon a peak in Darien," he remarked, in a needlessly loud and cheerful voice; and though the claim, thus expressed, was illogical, it was not inappropriate. He did feel as if he were a primitive adventurer just come to the New World, instead of a modern traveller just come from it.

"I wonder," he proceeded, "whether I am really the first that ever burst into this silent tree. It looks like it. Those——"

He stopped and sat on his branch quite motionless, but his eyes were turned on a branch a little below it, and they were brilliant with a vigilance, like those of a man watching a snake.

What he was looking at might, at first sight, have been a large white fungus spreading on the smooth and monstrous trunk; but it was not. Leaning down dangerously from his perch, he detached it from the twig on which it had caught, and then sat holding it in his hand and gazing at it. It was Squire Vane's white Panama hat, but there was no Squire Vane under it. Paynter felt a nameless relief in the very fact that there was not.

There in the clear sunlight and sea air, for an instant, all the tropical terrors of his own idle tale surrounded and suffocated him. It seemed indeed some demon tree of the swamps; a vegetable serpent that fed on men. Even the hideous farce in the fancy of digesting a whole man with the exception of his hat, seemed only to simplify the nightmare. And he found himself

gazing dully at one leaf of the tree, which happened to be turned towards him, so that the odd markings, which had partly made the legend, really looked a little like the eye in a peacock's feather. It was as if the sleeping tree had opened one eye upon him.

With a sharp effort he steadied himself in mind and posture on the bough; his reason returned, and he began to descend with the hat in his teeth. When he was back in the underworld of the wood, he studied the hat again and with closer attention. In one place in the crown there was a hole or rent, which certainly had not been there when it had last lain on the table under the garden tree. He sat down, lit a cigarette, and reflected for a long time.

A wood, even a small wood, is not an easy thing to search minutely; but he provided himself with some practical tests in the matter. In one sense the very density of the thicket was a help; he could at least see where anyone had strayed from the path, by broken and trampled growths of every kind. After many hours' industry, he had made a sort of new map of the place; and had decided beyond doubt that some person or persons had so strayed, for some purpose, in several defined directions. There was a way burst through the bushes, making a short cut across a loop of the wandering path; there was another forking out from it as an alternative way into the central space. But there was one especially which was unique, and which seemed to him, the more he studied it, to point to some essential of the mystery.

One of these beaten and broken tracks went from the space under the peacock trees outwards into the wood for about twenty yards and then stopped. Beyond that point not a twig was broken nor a leaf disturbed. It had no exit, but he could not believe that it had no goal. After some further reflection, he knelt down and began to cut away grass and clay with his knife, and was surprised at the ease with which they detached themselves. In a few moments a whole section of the soil lifted like a lid; it was a round lid and presented a quaint appearance, like a flat cap with green feathers. For though the disc itself was made of wood, there was a layer of earth on it with the live grass still growing there. And the removal of the round lid revealed a round hole, black as night and seemingly bottomless. Paynter understood it instantly. It was rather near the sea for a well to be sunk, but the traveller had known wells sunk even nearer. He rose to his feet with the great knife in his hand, a frown on his face, and his doubts resolved. He no longer shrank from naming what he knew. This was not the first corpse that had been thrown down a well; here, without stone or epitaph, was the grave of Squire Vane. In a flash all the mythological follies about saints and peacocks were forgotten; he was knocked on the head, as with a stone club, by the human common sense of crime.

Cyprian Paynter stood long by the well in the wood, walked round it in meditation, examined its rim and the ring of grass about it, searched the surrounding soil thoroughly, came back and stood beside the well once more. His researches and reflections had been so long that he had not realised that the day had passed and that the wood and the world around it were beginning already to be steeped in the enrichment of evening. The day had been radiantly calm; the sea seemed to be as still as the well, and the well was as still as a mirror. And then, quite without warning, the mirror moved of itself like a living thing.

In the well in the wood the water leapt and gurgled, with a grotesque noise like something swallowing, and then settled again with a second sound. Cyprian could not see into the well clearly, for the opening, from where he stood, was an ellipse, a mere slit, and half masked by thistles and rank grass like a green beard. For where he stood now was three yards away from the well, and he had not yet himself realised that he had sprung back all that distance from the brink when the water spoke.

III

THE MYSTERY OF THE WELL

CYPRIAN PAYNTER did not know what he expected to see rise out of the well—the corpse of the murdered man or merely the spirit of the fountain. Anyhow, neither of them rose out of it, and he recognised after an instant that this was, after all, perhaps the more natural course of things. Once more he pulled himself together, walked to the edge of the well and looked down. He saw, as before, a dim glimmer of water, at that depth no brighter than ink; he fancied he still heard a faint convulsion and murmur, but it gradually

subsided to an utter stillness. Short of suicidally diving in, there was nothing to be done. He realised that, with all his equipment, he had not even brought anything like a rope or basket, and at length decided to return for them. As he retraced his steps to the entrance, he recurred to, and took stock of, his more solid discoveries. Somebody had gone into the wood, killed the Squire and thrown him down the well, but he did not admit for a moment that it was his friend the poet; but if the latter had actually been seen coming out of the wood the matter was serious. As he walked the rapidly darkening twilight was cloven with red gleams, that made him almost fancy for a moment that some fantastic criminal had set fire to the tiny forest as he fled. A second glance showed him nothing but one of those red sunsets in which such serene days sometimes close.

As he came out of the gloomy gate of trees into the full glow he saw a dark figure standing quite still in the dim bracken, on the spot where he had left the woodcutter. It was not the woodcutter.

It was topped by a tall black hat of a funereal type, and the whole figure stood so black against the field of crimson fire that edged the skyline that he could not for an instant understand or recall it. When he did, it was with an odd change in the whole channel of his thoughts.

"Dr. Brown!" he cried. "Why, what are you doing up here?"

"I have been talking to poor Martin," answered the doctor, and made a rather awkward movement with his hand towards the road down to the village. Following the gesture, Paynter dimly saw another dark figure walking away in the blood-red distance. He also saw that the hand motioning was really black, and not merely in shadow; and, coming nearer, found the doctor's dress was really funereal, down to the detail of the dark gloves. It gave the American a small but queer shock, as if this were actually an undertaker come up to bury the corpse that could not be found.

"Poor Martin's been looking for his chopper," observed Dr. Brown, "but I to'd him I'd picked it up and kept it for him. Between ourselves, I hardly think he's fit to be trusted with it." Then, seeing the glance at his black garb, he added: "I've just been to a funeral. Did you know there's been another loss? Poor Jake the fisherman's wife, down in the cottage on the shore, you know. This infernal fever, of course."

As they both turned, facing the red evening light, Paynter instinctively made a closer study, not merely of the doctor's clothes, but of the doctor. Dr. Burton Brown was a tall, alert man, neatly dressed, who would otherwise have had an almost military air but for his spectacles and an almost painful intellectualism in his lean brown face and bald brow. The contrast was clinched by the fact that, while his face was of the ascetic type generally conceived as clean-shaven, he had a strip of dark moustache cut too short for him to bite, and yet a mouth that often moved as if trying to bite it. He might have been a very intelligent army surgeon, but he had more the look of an engineer or one of those services that combine a military silence with a more than military science. Paynter had always respected something ruggedly reliable about the man, and after a little hesitation he told him all the discoveries.

The doctor took the hat of the dead Squire in his hand, and examined it with frowning care. He put one finger through the hole in the crown and moved it meditatively. And Paynter realised how fanciful his own fatigue must have made him; for so silly a thing as the black finger waggling through the rent in that frayed white relic unreasonably displeased him. The doctor soon made the same discovery with professional acuteness, and applied it much further. For when Paynter began to tell him of the moving water in the well he looked at him a moment through his spectacles, and then said:

"Did you have any lunch?"

Paynter for the first time realised that he had, as a fact, worked and thought furiously all day without food.

"Please don't fancy I mean you had too much lunch," said the medical man, with mournful humour. "On the contrary, I mean you had too little. I think you are a bit knocked out, and your nerves exaggerate things. Anyhow, let me advise you not to do any more to-night. There's nothing to be done without ropes or some sort of fishing tackle, if with that; but I think I can get you some of the sort of grappling irons the fishermen use for dragging. Poor Jake's got some, I know; I'll bring them round to you to-morrow morning. The fact is, I'm staying there for a bit as he's rather in a state, and I think it's better for me to

ask for the things and not a stranger. I am sure you'll understand."

Paynter understood sufficiently to assent, and hardly knew why he stood vacantly watching the doctor make his way down the steep road to the shore and the fisher's cottage. Then he threw off thoughts he had not examined, or even consciously entertained, and walked slowly and rather heavily back to the Vane Arms.

The doctor, still funereal in manner, though no longer so in costume, appeared punctually under the wooden sign next morning, laden with what he had promised; an apparatus of hooks and a hanging net for hoisting up anything sunk to a reasonable depth. He was about to proceed on his professional round, and said nothing further to deter the American from proceeding on his own very unprofessional experiment as a detective. That buoyant amateur had indeed recovered most if not all of yesterday's buoyancy, was now well fitted to pass any medical examination, and returned with all his own energy to the scene of yesterday's labours.

It may well have brightened and made breezier his second day's toil that he had not only the sunlight and the birds singing in the little wood, to say nothing of a more scientific apparatus to work with, but also human companionship, and that of the most intelligent type. After leaving the doctor and before leaving the village he had bethought himself of seeking the little court or square where stood the quiet brown house of Andrew Ashe, solicitor, and the operations of dragging were worked in double harness. Two heads were peering over the well in the wood: one yellow-haired, lean and eager; the other red-haired, heavy and pondering; and if it be true that two heads are better than one, it is truer that four hands are better than two. In any case, their united and repeated efforts bore fruit at last, if anything so hard and meagre and forlorn can be called a fruit. It weighed loosely in the net as it was lifted, and rolled out on the grassy edge of the well; it was a bone.

Ashe picked it up and stood with it in his hand, frowning.

"We want Dr. Brown here," he said. "This may be the bone of some animal. Any dog or sheep might fall into a hidden well." Then he broke off, for his companion was already detaching a second bone from the net.

After another half-hour's effort Paynter had occasion to remark, "It must have been rather a large dog." There were already a heap of such white fragments at his feet.

"I have seen nothing yet," said Ashe, speaking more plainly. "That is certainly a human bone."

"I fancy this must be a human bone," said the American.

And he turned away a little as he handed the other a skull.

There was no doubt of what sort of skull; there was the one unique curve that holds the mystery of reason, and underneath it the two black holes that had held human eyes. But just above that on the left was another and smaller black hole, which was not an eye.

Then the lawyer said, with something like an effort: "We may admit it is a man without admitting it is—any particular man. There may be something, after all, in that yarn about the drunkard; he may have tumbled into the well. Under certain conditions, after certain natural processes, I fancy, the bones might be stripped in this way, even without the skill of any assassin. We want the doctor again."

Then he added suddenly, and the very sound of his voice suggested that he hardly believed his own words.

"Haven't you got poor Vane's hat there?"

He took it from the silent American's hand, and with a sort of hurry fitted it on the bony head.

"Don't!" said the other involuntarily.

The lawyer had put his finger, as the doctor had done, through the hole in the hat, and it lay exactly over the hole in the skull.

"I have the better right to shrink," he said steadily, but in a vibrant voice. "I think I am the older friend."

Paynter nodded without speech, accepting the final identification. The last doubt, or hope, had departed, and he turned to the dragging apparatus, and did not speak till he had made his last find.

The singing of the birds seemed to grow louder about them, and the dance of the green summer leaves was repeated beyond in the dance of the green summer sea. Only the great roots of the mysterious trees could be seen, the rest being far aloft, and all round it was a wood of little, lively and happy things. They might have been two

innocent naturalists, or even two children fishing for efts or tittlebats on that summer holiday when Paynter pulled up something that weighed in the net more heavily than any bone. It nearly broke the meshes, and fell against a mossy stone with a clang.

"Truth lies at the bottom of a well," cried the American, with lift in his voice. "The woodman's axe."

It lay, indeed, flat and gleaming in the grasses by the well in the wood, just as it had lain in the thicket where the woodman threw it in the beginning of all these things. But on one corner of the bright blade was a dull brown stain.

"I see," said Ashe, "the woodman's axe, and therefore the woodman. Your deductions are rapid."

"My deductions are reasonable," said Paynter. "Look here, Mr. Ashe; I know what you're thinking. I know you distrust Treherne; but I'm sure you will be just for all that. To begin with, surely the first assumption is that the woodman's axe is used by the woodman. What have you to say to it?"

"I say 'No' to it," replied the lawyer. "The last weapon a woodman would use would be a woodman's axe; that is if he is a sane man."

"He isn't," said Paynter quietly; "you said you wanted the doctor's opinion just now. The doctor's opinion on this point is the same as my own. We both found him meandering about outside there; it's obvious this business has gone to his head, at any rate. If the murderer were a man of business like yourself, what you say might be sound. But this murderer is a mystic. He was driven by some fanatical fad about the trees. It's quite likely he thought there was something solemn and sacrificial about the axe, and would have liked to cut off Vane's head before a crowd, like Charles I.'s. He's looking for the axe still, and probably thinks it a holy relic."

"For which reason," said Ashe, smiling, "he instantly chucked it down a well."

Paynter laughed.

"You have me there certainly," he said. "But I think you have something else in your mind. You'll say, I suppose, that we were all watching the wood; but were we? Frankly, I could almost fancy the peacock trees did strike me with a sort of sickness—a sleeping sickness."

"Well," admitted Ashe, "you have me there too. I'm afraid I couldn't swear I was awake all the time; but I don't put it down to magic trees—only to a private hobby of going to bed at night. But look here, Mr. Paynter; there's another and better argument against any outsider from the village or countryside having committed the crime. Granted he might have slipped past us somehow, and gone for the Squire. But why should he go for him in the wood? How did he know he was in the wood? You remember how suddenly the poor old boy bolted into it, on what a momentary impulse. It's the last place where one would normally look for such a man in the middle of the night. No, it's an ugly thing to say, but we, the group round that garden table, were the only people who knew. Which brings me back to the one point in your remarks which I happen to think perfectly true."

"What was that?" inquired the other.

"That the murderer was a mystic," said Ashe. "But a cleverer mystic than poor old Martin."

Paynter made a murmur of protest, and then fell silent.

"Let us talk plainly," resumed the lawyer. "Treherne had all those mad motives you yourself admit against the woodcutter. He had the knowledge of Vane's whereabouts, which nobody can possibly attribute to the woodcutter. But he had much more. Who taunted and goaded the Squire to go into the wood at all? Treherne. Who practically prophesied, like an infernal quack astrologer, that something would happen to him if he did go into the wood? Treherne. Who was, for some reason, no matter what, obviously burning with rage and restlessness all that night, kicking his legs impatiently to and fro on the cliff, and breaking out with wild words about it being all over soon? Treherne. And on top of all this, when I walked closer to the wood, whom did I see slip out of it swiftly and silently like a shadow, but turning his face once to the moon? On my oath and on my honour—Treherne."

"It is awful," said Paynter, like a man stunned. "What you say is simply awful."

"Yes," said Ashe seriously, "very awful, but very simple. Treherne knew where the axe was originally thrown. I saw him, on that day he lunched here first, watching it like a wolf, while Miss Vane was talking to him. On that dreadful night he could easily have picked it up as he went into the

wood. He knew about the well, no doubt; who was so likely to know any old traditions about the peacock trees? He hid the hat in the trees, where perhaps he hoped (though the point is unimportant) that nobody would dare to look. Anyhow, he hid it, simply because it was the one thing that would not sink in the well. Mr. Paynter, do you think I would say this of any man in mere mean dislike? Could any man say it of any man unless the case were complete, as this is complete?"

"It is complete," said Paynter, very pale. "I have nothing left against it but a faint, irrational feeling; a feeling that, somehow or other, if poor Vane could stand alive before us at this moment he might tell some other and even more incredible tale."

Ashe made a mournful gesture.

"Can these dry bones live," he said.

"Lord Thou knowest," answered the other mechanically. "Even these dry bones——"

And he stopped suddenly with his mouth open, a blinding light of wonder in his pale eyes.

"See here," he said hoarsely and hastily. "You have said the word. What does it mean? What can it mean? Dry? Why are these bones dry?"

The lawyer started and stared down at the heap.

"Your case complete!" cried Paynter, in mounting excitement. "Where is the water in the well? The water I saw leap like a flame? Why did it leap? Where is it gone to? Complete! We are buried under riddles."

Ashe stooped, picked up a bone and looked at it.

"You are right," he said, in a low and shaken voice; "this bone is as dry—as a bone."

"Yes, I am right," replied Cyprian. "And your mystic is still as mysterious—as a mystic."

There was a long silence. Ashe laid down the bone, picked up the axe and studied it more closely. Beyond the dull stain at the corner of the steel there was nothing unusual about it save a broad white rag wrapped round the handle, perhaps to give a better grip. The lawyer thought it worth noting, however, that the rag was certainly newer and cleaner than the chopper. But both were quite dry.

"Mr. Paynter," he said at last, "I admit you have scored, in the spirit if not the letter. In strict logic, this greater puzzle is not a reply to my case. If this axe has not been dipped in water, it has been dipped in blood; and the water jumping out of the well is not an explanation of the poet jumping out of the wood. But I admit that morally and practically it does make a vital difference. We are now faced with a colossal contradiction, and we don't know how far it extends. The body might have been broken up or boiled down to the bones by the murderer, though it may be hard to connect it with the conditions of the murder. It might conceivably have been so reduced by some property in the water and soil, for decomposition varies vastly with these things. I should not dismiss my strong prima facie case against the likely person because of these difficulties. But here we have something entirely different. That the bones themselves should remain dry in a well full of water, or a well that yesterday was full of water—that brings us to the edge of something beyond which we can make no guess. There is a new factor, enormous and quite unknown. While we can't fit together such prodigious facts, we can't fit together a case against Treherne or against anybody. No; there is only one thing to be done now. Since we can't accuse Treherne, we must appeal to him. We must put the case against him frankly before him, and trust he has an explanation—and will give it. I suggest we go back and do it now."

Paynter, beginning to follow, hesitated a moment, and then said: "Forgive me for a kind of liberty; as you say, you are an older friend of the family. I entirely agree with your suggestion, but before you act on your present suspicions, do you know, I think Miss Vane ought to be warned a little? I rather fear all this will be a new shock to her."

"Very well," said Ashe, after looking at him steadily for an instant. "Let us go across to her first."

¶

FROM the opening of the wood they could see Barbara Vane writing at the garden table, which was littered with correspondence, and the butler with his yellow face waiting behind her chair. As the lengths of grass lessened between them, and the little group at the table grew larger and

clearer in the sunlight, Paynter had a painful sense of being part of an embassy of doom. It sharpened when the girl looked up from the table and smiled on seeing them.

"I should like to speak to you rather particularly if I may," said the lawyer, with a touch of authority in his respect; and when the butler was dismissed he laid open the whole matter before her, speaking sympathetically, but leaving out nothing, from the strange escape of the poet from the wood to the last detail of the dry bones out of the well. No fault could be found with any one of his tones or phrases, and yet Cyprian, tingling in every nerve with the fine delicacy of his nation about the other sex, felt as if she were faced with an inquisitor. He stood about uneasily, watched the few coloured clouds in the clear sky and the bright birds darting about the wood, and he heartily wished himself up the tree again.

Soon, however, the way the girl took it began to move him to perplexity rather than pity. It was like nothing he had expected, and yet he could not name the shade of difference. The final identification of her father's skull, by the hole in the hat, turned her a little pale, but left her composed; this was, perhaps, explicable, since she had from the first taken the pessimistic view. But during the rest of the tale there rested on her broad brows under her copper coils of hair a brooding spirit that was itself a mystery. He could only tell himself that she was less merely receptive, either firmly or weakly, than he would have expected. It was as if she revolved, not their problem, but her own. She was silent a long time, and said at last:

"Thank you, Mr. Ashe, I am really very grateful for this. After all, it brings things to the point where they must have come sooner or later." She looked dreamily at the wood and sea, and went on: "I've not only had myself to consider, you see; but if you're really thinking *that*, it's time I spoke out, without asking anybody. You say, as if it were something very dreadful, 'Mr. Treherne was in the wood that night.' Well, it's not quite so dreadful to me, you see, because I know he was. In fact, we were there together."

"Together!" repeated the lawyer.

"We were together," she said quietly, "because we had a right to be together."

"Do you mean," stammered Ashe, surprised out of himself, "that you were engaged?"

"Oh, no," she said. "We were married."

Then, amid a startled silence, she added, as a kind of afterthought:

"In fact, we are still."

Strong as was his composure, the lawyer sat back in his chair with a sort of solid stupefaction at which Paynter could not help smiling.

"You will ask me, of course," went on Barbara in the same measured manner, "why we should be married secretly, so that even my poor father did not know. Well, I answer you quite frankly to begin because, if he had known, he would certainly have cut me off with a shilling. He did not like my husband, and I rather fancy you don't like him either. And when I tell you this, I know perfectly well what you will say—the usual adventurer getting hold of the usual heiress. It is quite reasonable, and, as it happens, it is quite wrong. If I had deceived my father for the sake of the money, or even for the sake of a man, I should be a little ashamed to talk to you about it. And I think you can see that I am not ashamed."

Be Peace Along Your Way

BE Peace along your way,
When at length you turn
Home through the glimmering trees
And dewy fern.

Be peace within your eyes,
And in your heart a singing,
For all the beauty of life,
Homeward winging.

For fugitive fair things
That whispered and shone,
And lit your path for a short way,
And then were gone.

Sorrow and Love and Laughter,
May they all be one,
With the great peace in your heart,
At set of sun.

NORAH STEWART NISBET

"Yes," said the American, with a grave inclination, "yes, I can see that."

She looked at him thoughtfully for a moment, as if seeking words for an obscure matter, and then said:

"Do you remember, Mr. Paynter, that day you first lunched here and told us about the African trees? Well, it was my birthday; I mean my first birthday. I was born then, or woke up or something. I had walked in this garden like a somnambulist in the sun. I think there are many such somnambulists in our set and our society; stunned with health, drugged with good manners, fitting their surroundings too well to be alive. Well, I came alive somehow; and you know how deep in us are the things we first realised when we were babies and began to take notice. I began to take notice. One of the first things I noticed was your own story, Mr. Paynter. I feel as if I heard of St. Securis as children hear of Santa Claus, and as if that big tree were a bogey I still believed in. For I do still believe in such things, or rather I believe in them more and more; I feel certain my poor father drove on the rocks by disbelieving, and you are all racing to ruin after him. That is why I do honestly want the estate, and that is why I am not ashamed of wanting it. I am perfectly certain, Mr. Paynter, that nobody can save this perishing land and this perishing people but those who understand. I mean who understand a thousand little signs and guides in the very soil and lie of the land, and traces that are almost trampled out. My husband understands, and I have begun to understand; my father would never have understood. There are powers, there is the spirit of a place, there are presences that are not to be put by. Oh, don't fancy I am sentimental and hanker after the good old days. The old days were not all good; that is just the point, and we must understand enough to know the good from the evil. We must understand enough to save the traces of a saint or a sacred tradition, or, where a wicked god has been worshipped, to destroy his altar and to cut down his grove."

"His grove," said Paynter automatically, and looked towards the little wood, where the sun-bright birds were flying.

"Mrs. Treherne," said Ashe, with a formidable quietness, "I am not so unsympathetic with all this as you may perhaps suppose. I will not even say it is all moonshine, for it is something better. It is, if I may say so, honeymoonshine. I will never deny the saying that it makes the world go round, if it makes people's heads go round, too. But there are other sentiments, madam, and other duties. I need not tell you your father was a good man, and that what has befallen him would be pitiable, even as the fate of the wicked. This is a horrible thing, and it is chiefly among horrors that we must keep our common sense. There are seasons for everything, and when my old friend lies butchered do not come to me with even the most beautiful fairy tales about a saint and his enchanted grove."

"Well, and you!" she cried, and rose radiantly and swiftly. "With what kind of fairy tales do you come to me? In what enchanted groves are *you* walking? You come and tell me that Mr. Paynter found a well where the water danced and then disappeared; but of course miracles are all moonshine! You tell me you yourself fished bones from under the same water, and every bone was as dry as a biscuit; but for Heaven's sake let us say nothing that makes anybody's head go round! Really, Mr. Ashe, you must try to preserve your common sense."

She was smiling, but with blazing eyes; and Ashe got to his feet with an involuntary laugh of surrender.

"Well, we must be going," he said. "May I say that a tribute is really due to your new transcendental training? If I may say so, I always knew you had brains; and you've been learning to use them."

The two amateur detectives went back to the wood for the moment, that Ashe might consider the removal of the unhappy Squire's remains. As he pointed out, it was now legally possible to have an inquest, and even at that early stage of investigations, he was in favour of having it at once. "I shall be the coroner," he said, "and I think it will be a case of 'some person or persons unknown.' Don't be surprised; it is often done to give the guilty a false security. This is not the first time the police have found it convenient to have the inquest first and the inquiry afterwards."

But Paynter had paid little attention to the point; for his great gift of enthusiasm, long wasted on arts and affectations, was lifted to inspiration by the romance of real life into which he had just walked. He was really a great critic; he had a genius for admiration, and his admiration varied fittingly with everything he admired.

"A splendid girl and a splendid story," he cried. "I feel as if I were in love again myself, not so much with her as with Eve or Helen of Troy, or some such tower of beauty in the morning of the world. Don't you love all heroic things, that gravity and great candour, and the way she took one step from a sort of throne to stand in a wilderness with a vagabond? Oh, believe me, it is she who is the poet; she has the higher reason, and honour and valour are at rest in her soul."

"In short, she is uncommonly pretty," replied Ashe, with some cynicism. "I knew a murderess rather well who was very much like her, and had just that coloured hair."

"You talk as if a murderer could be caught red-haired instead of red-handed," retorted Paynter. "Why, at this very minute, you could be caught red-haired yourself. Are you a murderer, by any chance?"

Ashe looked up quickly, and then smiled.

"I'm afraid I'm a connoisseur in murderers, as you are in poets," he answered, "and I assure you they are of all colours in hair as well as temperament. I suppose it's inhumane, but mine is a monstrously interesting trade, even in a little place like this. As for that girl, of course I've known her all her life, and—— But—but that is just the question. Have I known her all her life? Have I known her at all? Was she even there to be known? You admire her for telling the truth; and so she did, by God, when she said that some people wake up late, who have never lived before. Do we know what they might do—we, who have only seen them asleep?"

"Great heavens!" cried Paynter. "You don't dare suggest that she——"

"No, I don't," said the lawyer, with composure, "but there are other reasons. . . . I don't suggest anything fully, till we've had our interview with this poet of yours. I think I know where to find him."

They found him, in fact, before they expected him, sitting on the bench outside the Vane Arms, drinking a mug of cider and waiting for the return of his American friend; so it was not difficult to open conversation with him. Nor did he in any way avoid the subject of the tragedy; and the lawyer, seating himself also on the long bench that fronted the little market-place, was soon putting the last developments as lucidly as he had put them to Barbara.

"Well," said Treherne at last, leaning back and frowning at the signboard, with the coloured birds and dolphins, just above his head; "suppose somebody did kill the Squire. He'd killed a good many people with his hygiene and his enlightened landlordism."

Paynter was considerably uneasy at this alarming opening; but the poet went on quite coolly, with his hands in his pockets and his feet thrust out into the street.

"When a man has the power of a Sultan in Turkey, and uses it with the ideas of a spinster in Tooting, I often wonder that nobody puts a knife in him. I wish there were more sympathy for murderers, somehow. I'm very sorry the poor old fellow's gone myself; but you gentlemen always seem to forget there are any other people in the world. He's all right; he was a good fellow, and his soul, I fancy, has gone to the happiest paradise of all."

The anxious American could read nothing of the effect of this in the dark Napoleonic face of the lawyer, who merely said: "What do you mean?"

"The fool's paradise," said Treherne, and drained his pot of cider.

The lawyer rose. He did not look at Treherne, or speak to him; but looked and spoke straight across him to the American, who found the utterance not a little unexpected.

"Mr. Paynter," said Ashe, "you thought it rather morbid of me to collect murderers; but it's fortunate for your own view of the case that I do. It may surprise you to know that Mr. Treherne has now, in my eyes, entirely cleared himself of suspicion. I have been intimate with several assassins, as I remarked; but there's one thing none of them ever did. I never knew a murderer talk about the murder, and then at once deny it and defend it. No, if a man is concealing his crime, why should he go out of his way to apologise for it?"

"Well," said Paynter, with his ready appreciation, "I always said you were a remarkable man; and that's certainly a remarkable idea."

"Do I understand," asked the poet, kicking his heels on the cobbles, "that both you gentlemen have been kindly directing me towards the gallows?"

"No," said Paynter thoughtfully, "I never thought you guilty; and even supposing I had, if you understand me, I should never have thought it quite so guilty to be guilty. It would not have been for

money or any mean thing, but for something a little wilder and worthier of a man of genius. After all, I suppose, the poet has passions like great unearthly appetites; and the world has always judged more gently of his sins. But now that Mr. Ashe admits your innocence, I can honestly say I have always affirmed it."

The poet rose also. "Well, I am innocent, oddly enough," he said. "I think I can make a guess about your vanishing well, but of the death and dry bones I know no more than the dead—if so much. And, by the way, my dear Paynter"—and he turned two bright eyes on the art critic—"I will excuse you from excusing me for all the things I haven't done; and you, I hope, will excuse me if I differ from you altogether about the morality of poets. As you suggest, it is a fashionable view, but I think it is a fallacy. No man has less right to be lawless than a man of imagination. For he has spiritual adventures, and can take his holidays when he likes. I could picture the poor Squire carried off to elfland whenever I wanted him carried off, and that wood needed no crime to make it wicked for me. That red sunset the other night was all that a murder would have been to many men. No, Mr. Ashe; show, when next you sit in judgment, a little mercy to some wretched man who drinks and robs because he must drink beer to taste it, and take it to drink it. Have compassion on the next batch of poor thieves, who have to hold things in order to have them. But if ever you find *me* stealing one small farthing, when I can shut my eyes and see the city of El Dorado, then"—and he lifted his head like a falcon—"show me no mercy, for I shall deserve none."

"Well," remarked Ashe, after a pause, "I must go and fix things up for the inquest. Mr. Treherne, your attitude is singularly interesting; I really almost wish I could add you to my collection of murderers. They are a varied and extraordinary set."

"Has it ever occurred to you," asked Paynter, "that perhaps the men who have never committed murder are a varied and very extraordinary set? Perhaps every plain man's life holds the real mystery, the secret of sins avoided."

"Possibly," replied Ashe. "It would be a long business to stop the next man in the street and ask him what crimes he never committed and why not. And I happen to be busy, so you'll excuse me."

"What," asked the American, when he and the poet were alone, "is this guess of yours about the vanishing water?"

"Well, I'm not sure I'll tell you yet," answered Treherne, something of the old mischief coming back into his dark eyes. "But I'll tell you something else, which may be connected with it; something I couldn't tell until my wife had told you about our meeting in the wood." His face had grown grave again, and he resumed after a pause:

"When my wife started to follow her father I advised her to go back first to the house, to leave it by another door and to meet me in the wood in half an hour. We often made these assignations, of course, and generally thought them great fun, but this time the question was serious, and I didn't want the wrong thing done in a hurry. It was a question whether anything could be done to undo an experiment we both vaguely felt to be dangerous, and she especially thought, after reflection, that interference would make things worse. She thought the old sportsman, having been dared to do something, would certainly not be dissuaded by the very man who had dared him or by a woman whom he regarded as a child. She left me at last in a sort of despair, but I lingered with a last hope of doing something, and drew doubtfully near to the heart of the wood; and there, instead of the silence I expected, I heard a voice. It seemed as if the Squire must be talking to himself, and I had the unpleasant fancy that he had already lost his reason in that wood of witchcraft. But I soon found that if he was talking he was talking with two voices. Other fancies attacked me, as that the other voice was the voice of the tree or the voices of the three trees talking together, and with no man near. But it was not the voice of the tree, for I had heard it twenty times across the table. It was the voice of that doctor of yours; I heard it as certainly as you hear my voice now."

After a moment's silence, he resumed: "I left the wood, I hardly knew why, and with wild and bewildered feelings; and as I came out into the faint moonshine I saw that old lawyer standing quietly, but staring at me like an owl. At least, the light touched his red hair with fire, but his square old face was in shadow. But I knew, if I could have read it, that it was the face of a hanging judge."

He threw himself on the bench again,

smiled a little, and added: "Only, like a good many hanging judges, I fancy, he was waiting patiently to hang the wrong man."

"And the right man——" said Paynter mechanically. Treherne shrugged his shoulders, sprawling on the ale-bench, and played with his empty pot.

IV

THE CHASE AFTER THE TRUTH

SOME time after the inquest, which had ended in the inconclusive verdict which Mr. Andrew Ashe had himself predicted and achieved, Paynter was again sitting on the bench outside the village inn, having on the little table in front of it a tall glass of light ale, which he enjoyed much more as local colour than as liquor. He had but one companion on the bench, and that a new one, for the little market-place was empty at that hour, and he had lately, for the rest, been much alone. He was not unhappy, for he resembled his great countryman, Walt Whitman, in carrying a kind of universe with him like an open umbrella; but he was not only alone, but lonely. For Ashe had gone abruptly up to London, and since his return had been occupied obscurely with legal matters, doubtless bearing on the murder. And Treherne had long since taken up his position openly at the great house as the husband of the great lady, and he and she were occupied with sweeping reforms on the estate. The lady especially, being of the sort whose very dreams "drive at practice," was landscape gardening as with the gestures of a giantess. It was natural, therefore, that so sociable a spirit as Paynter should fall into speech with the one other stranger who happened to be staying at the inn, evidently a bird of passage like himself.

This man, who was smoking a pipe on the bench beside him, with his knapsack before him on the table, was an artist come to sketch on that romantic coast; a tall man in a velvet jacket, with a shock of tow-coloured hair, a long fair beard, but eyes of dark brown, the effect of which contrast reminded Paynter vaguely, he hardly knew why, of a Russian. The stranger carried his knapsack into many picturesque corners; he obtained permission to set up his easel in that high garden where the late Squire had held his al fresco banquets. But Paynter had never had an opportunity of judging of the artist's work, nor did he find it easy to get the artist even to talk of his art. Cyprian himself was always ready to talk of any art, and he talked of it excellently, but with little response. He gave his own reasons for preferring the Cubists to the cult of Picasso, but his new friend seemed to have but a faint interest in either. He insinuated that perhaps the Neo-Primitives were after all only thinning their line, while the true Primitives were rather tightening it; but the stranger seemed to receive the insinuation without any marked reaction of feeling. When Paynter had even gone back as far into the past as the Post-Impressionists to find a common ground, and not found it, other memories began to creep back into his mind. He was just reflecting, rather darkly, that after all the tale of the peacock trees needed a mysterious stranger to round it off, and this man had much the air of being one, when the mysterious stranger himself said suddenly:

"Well, I think I'd better show you the work I'm doing down here."

He had his knapsack before him on the table, and he smiled rather grimly as he began to unstrap it. Paynter looked on with polite expressions of interest, but was considerably surprised when the artist unpacked and placed on the table, not any recognisable works of art, even of the most Cubist description, but (first) a quire of foolscap closely written with notes in black and red ink, and (second), to the American's extreme amazement, the old woodman's axe with the linen wrapper, which he had himself found in the well long ago.

"Sorry to give you a start, sir," said the Russian artist, with a marked London accent. "But I'd better explain straight off that I'm a policeman."

"You don't look it," said Paynter.

"I'm not supposed to," replied the other. "Mr. Ashe brought me down here from the Yard to investigate; but he told me to report to you when I'd got anything to go on. Would you like to go into the matter now?

"When I took this matter up," explained the detective, "I did it at Mr. Ashe's request, and largely, of course, on Mr. Ashe's lines. Mr. Ashe is a great criminal lawyer; with a beautiful brain, sir, as full as the Newgate Calendar. I took, as a working notion, his view that only you five gentlemen round the table in the Squire's garden were acquainted with the

Squire's movements. But you gentlemen, if I may say so, have a way of forgetting certain other things and other people which we are rather taught to look for first. And as I followed Mr. Ashe's inquiries through the stages you know already, through certain suspicions I needn't discuss because they've been dropped, I found the thing shaping after all towards something, in the end, which I think we should have considered at the beginning. Now, to begin with, it is not true that there were five men round the table. There were six."

The creepy conditions of that garden vigil vaguely returned upon Paynter; and he thought of a ghost, or something more nameless than a ghost. But the deliberate speech of the detective soon enlightened him.

"There were six men and five gentlemen, if you like to put it so," he proceeded. "That man Miles the butler saw the Squire vanish as plainly as you did; and I soon found that Miles was a man worthy of a good deal of attention."

A light of understanding dawned on Paynter's face. "So that was it, was it?" he muttered. "Does all our mythological mystery end with a policeman collaring a butler? Well, I agree with you he is far from an ordinary butler, even to look at; and the fault in imagination is mine. Like many faults in imagination, it was simply snobbishness."

"We don't go quite so fast as that," observed the officer, in an impassive manner. "I only said I found the inquiry pointing to Miles; and that he was well worthy of attention. He was much more in the old Squire's confidence than many people supposed; and when I cross-examined him he told me a good deal that was worth knowing. I've got it all down in these notes here; but at the moment I'll only trouble you with one detail of it. One night this butler was just outside the Squire's dining-room door, when he heard the noise of a violent quarrel. The Squire was a violent gentleman, from time to time; but the curious thing about this scene was that the other gentleman was the more violent of the two. Miles heard him say repeatedly that the Squire was a public nuisance, and that his death would be a good riddance for everybody. I only stop now to tell you that the other gentleman was Dr. Burton Brown, the medical man of this village.

"The next examination I made was that of Martin, the woodcutter. Upon one point at least his evidence is quite clear, and is, as you will see, largely confirmed by other witnesses. He says first that the doctor prevented him from recovering his axe, and this is corroborated by Mr. and and Mrs. Treherne. But he says further that the doctor admitted having the thing himself; and this again finds support in other evidence by the gardener, who saw the doctor, sometime afterwards, come by himself and pick up the chopper. Martin says that Dr. Brown repeatedly refused to give it up, alleging some fanciful excuse every time. And, finally, Mr. Paynter, we will hear the evidence of the axe itself."

He laid the woodman's tool on the table in front of him, and began to rip up and unwrap the curious linen covering round the handle.

"You will admit this is an odd bandage," he said. "And that's just the odd thing about it, that it really is a bandage. This white stuff is the sort of lint they use in hospitals, cut into strips like this. But most doctors keep some; and I have the evidence of Jake the fisherman, with whom Dr. Brown lived for some time, that the doctor had this useful habit. And, last," he added, flattening out a corner of the rag on the table, "isn't it odd that it should be marked T.B.B.?"

The American gazed at the rudely inked initials, but hardly saw them. What he saw, as in a mirror in his darkened memory, was the black figure with the black gloves against the blood-red sunset, as he had seen it when he came out of the wood, and which had always haunted him, he knew not why.

"Of course, I see what you mean," he said, "and it's very painful for me, for I knew and respected the man. But surely, also, it's very far from explaining everything. If he is a murderer, is he a magician? Why did the well-water all evaporate in a night, and leave the dead man's bones dry as dust? That's not a common operation in the hospitals, is it?"

"As to the water, we do know the explanation," said the detective. "I didn't tumble to it at first myself, being a Cockney; but a little talk with Jake and the other fishermen about the old smuggling days put me straight about that. But I admit the dried remains still stump us all. All the same——"

A shadow fell across the table, and his

talk was sharply cut short. Ashe was standing under the painted sign, buttoned up grimly in black, and with the face of the hanging judge, of which the poet had spoken, plain this time in the broad sunlight. Behind him stood two big men in plain clothes, very still; but Paynter knew instantly who they were.

"We must move at once," said the lawyer. "Dr. Burton Brown is leaving the village."

The tall detective sprang to his feet, and Paynter instinctively imitated him.

"He has gone up to the Treherne's possibly to say good-bye," went on Ashe rapidly. "I'm sorry, but we must arrest him in the garden there, if necessary. I've kept the lady out of the way, I think. But you"—addressing the fictitious landscape painter—"must go up at once and rig up that easel of yours near the table and be ready. We will follow quietly, and come up behind the tree. We must be careful, for it's clear he's got wind of us, or he wouldn't be doing a bolt."

"I don't like this job," remarked Paynter, as they mounted towards the park and garden, the detective darting on ahead.

"Do you suppose I do?" asked Ashe; and, indeed, his strong, heavy face looked so lined and old that the red hair seemed unnatural, like a red wig. "I've known him longer than you, though perhaps I've suspected him longer as well."

When they topped the slope of the garden the detective had already erected his easel, though a strong breeze blowing towards the sea rattled and flapped his apparatus and blew about his fair (and false) beard in the wind. Little clouds curled like feathers were scudding seawards across the many-coloured landscape, which the American art critic had once surveyed on a happier morning; but it is doubtful if the landscape painter paid much attention to it. Treherne was dimly discernible in the doorway of what was now his house; he would come no nearer, for he hated such a public duty more bitterly than the rest. The others posted themselves a little way behind the tree. Between the lines of these masked batteries the black figure of the doctor could be seen coming across the green lawn, travelling straight as a bullet, as he had done when he brought the bad news to the woodcutter. To-day he was smiling, under the dark moustache that was cut short of the upper lip, though they fancied him a little pale, and he seemed to pause a moment and peer through his spectacles at the artist.

The artist turned from his easel with a natural movement, and then in a flash had captured the doctor by the coat-collar.

"I arrest you——" he began; but Dr. Brown plucked himself free with startling promptitude, took a flying leap at the other, tore off his sham beard, tossing it into the air like one of the wild wisps of the cloud; then, with one wild kick, sent the easel flying topsy-turvy, and fled like a hare for the shore.

Even at the dazzling instant Paynter felt that this wild reception was a novelty and almost an anti-climax; but he had no time for analysis when he and the whole pack had to follow in the hunt; even Treherne bringing up the rear with a renewed curiosity and energy.

The fugitive collided with one of the policemen who ran to head him off, sending him sprawling down the slope; indeed, the fugitive seemed inspired with the strength of a wild ape. He cleared at a bound the rampart of flowers over which Barbara had once leaned to look at her future lover, and tumbled with blinding speed down the steep path up which that troubadour had climbed. Racing with the rushing wind they all streamed across the garden after him, down the path, and finally on to the seashore by the fisher's cot, and the pierced crags and caverns the American had admired when he first landed. The runaway did not, however, make for the house he had long inhabited, but rather for the pier, as if with a mind to seize the boat or to swim. Only when he reached the other end of the small stone jetty did he turn, and show them the pale face with the spectacles; and they saw that it was still smiling.

"I'm rather glad of this," said Treherne, with a great sigh. "The man is mad."

Nevertheless, the naturalness of the doctor's voice, when he spoke, startled them almost as much as a shriek. "Gentlemen," he said, "I won't protract your painful duties by asking you what you want; but I will ask at once for a small favour, which will not prejudice those duties in any way. I came down here rather in a hurry perhaps; but the truth is I thought I was late for an appointment." He looked dispassionately at his watch. "I find there is still some fifteen minutes. Will

you wait with me here for that short time; after which I am quite at your service."

There was a bewildered silence, and then Paynter said: "For my part, I feel as if it would really be better to humour him."

"Ashe," said the doctor, with a new note of seriousness, "for old friendship, grant me this last little indulgence. It will make no difference; I have no arms or means of escape; you can search me if you like. I know you think you are doing right, and I also know you will do it as fairly as you can. Well, after all, you get friends to help you; look at our friend with the beard, or the remains of the beard. Why shouldn't I have a friend to help me? A man will be here in a few minutes in whom I put some confidence; a great authority on these things. Why not, if only out of curiosity, wait and hear his view of the case?"

"This seems all moonshine," said Ashe, "but on the chance of any new light on things—well, from the moon—I don't mind waiting a quarter of an hour. Who is this friend, I wonder; some amateur detective, I suppose."

"I thank you," said the doctor, with some dignity. "I think you will trust him when you have talked to him a little. And now," he added with an air of amiably relaxing into lighter matters, "let us talk about the murder.

"This case," he said in a detached manner, "will be found, I suspect, to be rather unique. There is a very clear and conclusive combination of evidence against Thomas Burton Brown, otherwise myself. But there is one peculiarity about that evidence, which you may perhaps have noticed. It all comes ultimately from one source, and that a rather unusual one. Thus, the woodcutter says I had his axe, but what makes him think so? He says *I* told him I had his axe; that I told him so again and again. Once more, Mr. Paynter here pulled up the axe out of the well; but how? I think Mr. Paynter will testify that *I* brought him the tackle for fishing it up, tackle he might never have got in any other way. Curious, is it not? Again, the axe is found to be wrapped in lint that was in my possession, according to the fisherman. But who showed the lint to the fisherman? I did. Who marked it with large letters as mine? I did. Who wrapped it round the handle at all? I did. Rather a singular thing to do; has anyone ever explained it?"

His words, which had been heard at first with painful coldness, were beginning to hold more and more of their attention.

"Then there is the well itself," proceeded the doctor, with the same air of insane calm. "I suppose some of you by this time know at least the secret of that. The secret of the well is simply that it is not a well. It is purposely shaped at the top so as to look like one, but it is really a sort of chimney opening from the roof of one of those caves over there; a cave that runs inland just under the wood, and indeed is connected by tunnels and secret passages with other openings miles and miles away. It is a sort of labyrinth used by smugglers and such people for ages past. This doubtless explains many of those disappearances we have heard of. But to return to the well that is not a well, in case some of you still don't know about it. When the sea rises very high at certain seasons it fills the low cave, and even rises a little way in the funnel above, making it look more like a well than ever. The noise Mr. Paynter heard was the natural eddy of a breaker from outside, and the whole experience depended on something so elementary as the tide."

The American was startled into ordinary speech.

"The tide!" he said. "And I never even thought of it! I guess that comes of living by the Mediterranean."

"The next step will be obvious enough," continued the speaker, "to a logical mind like that of Mr. Ashe, for instance. If it be asked why, even so, the tide did not wash away the Squire's remains that had lain there since his disappearance, there is only one possible answer. The remains had *not* lain there since his disappearance. The remains had been deliberately put there in the cavern under the wood, and put there *after* Mr. Paynter had made his first investigation. They were put there, in short, after the sea had retreated and the cave was again dry. That is why they were dry; of course, much drier than the cave. Who put them there, I wonder?"

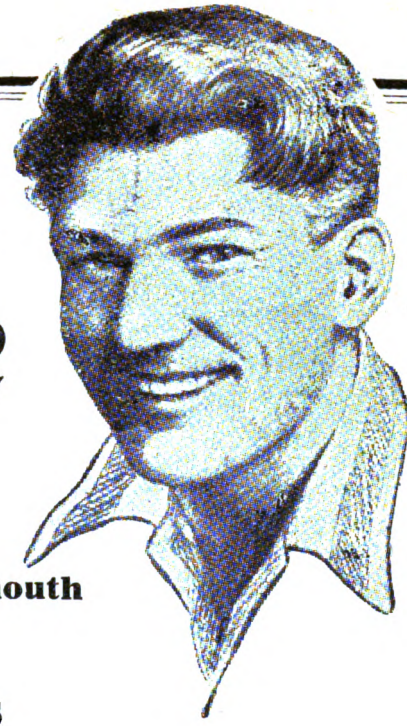
He was gazing gravely through his spectacles over their heads into vacancy, and suddenly he smiled.

"Ah," he cried, jumping up from the rock with alacrity, "here is the amateur detective at last!"

Ashe turned his head over his shoulder, and for a few seconds did not move it again, but stood as if with a stiff neck. In

(*Continued on page 146.*)

A dose at night
Awaken bright



WAKE UP SMILING!

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IF YOU HAVE
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A bad taste in the mouth
A furred tongue
An acid stomach
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Clear brain
And perfect digestion
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Worth living.

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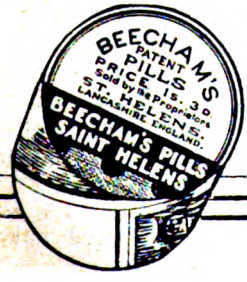
YOU SUFFER
SICK HEADACHE
BILIOUSNESS
INDIGESTION
CONSTIPATION
TORPID LIVER
TAKE

Beecham's Pills



Worth a Guinea a box

the cliff just behind him was one of the clefts or cracks into which it was everywhere cloven. Advancing from this into the sunshine, as if from a narrow door, was Squire Vane, with a broad smile on his face.

The wind was tearing from the top of the high cliff out to sea, passing over their heads and they had the sensation that everything was passing over their heads and out of their control. Paynter felt as if his head had been blown off like a hat. But none of this gale of unreason seemed to stir a hair on the white head of the Squire, whose bearing, though self-important and bordering on a swagger, seemed if anything more comfortable than in the old days. His red face was, however, burnt like a sailor's, and his light clothes had a foreign look.

" Well, gentlemen," he said genially, " so this is the end of the legend of the peacock trees. Sorry to spoil that delightful traveller's tale, Mr. Paynter, but the joke couldn't be kept up for ever. Sorry to put a stop to your best poem, Mr. Treherne, but I thought all this poetry had been going a little too far. So Dr. Brown and I fixed up a little surprise for you. And I must say, without vanity, that you look a little surprised."

" What on earth," asked Ashe at last, " is the meaning of all this ? "

The Squire laughed pleasantly, and even a little apologetically.

" I'm afraid I'm fond of practical jokes," he said, " and this I suppose is my last grand practical joke. But I want you to understand that the joke is really practical. I flatter myself it will be of very practical use to the cause of progress and common sense, and the killing of such silly superstitions everywhere. The best part of it, I admit, was the doctor's idea and not mine. All I meant to do was to pass a night in the trees, and then turn up as fresh as paint to tell you what fools you were. But Dr. Brown here followed me into the wood, and we had a little talk which rather changed my plans. He told me that a disappearance for a few hours like that would never knock the nonsense on the head ; most people would never even hear of it, and those who did would say that one night proved nothing. He showed me a much better way, which had been tried in several cases where bogus miracles had been shown up. The thing to do was to get the thing really believed everywhere as a miracle, and then shown up everywhere as a sham miracle. I can't put all the arguments as well as he did, but that was the notion, I think."

The doctor nodded, gazing silently at the sand ; and the Squire resumed with undiminished relish.

" We agreed that I should drop through the hole into the cave, and make my way though the tunnels, where I often used to play as a boy, to the railway station a few miles from here, and there take a train for London. It was necessary for the joke, of course, that I should disappear without being traced ; so I made my way to a port, and put in a very pleasant month or two round my old haunts in Cyprus and the Mediterranean. There's no more to say of that part of the business, except that I arranged to be back by a particular time ; and here I am. But I've heard enough of what's gone on round here to be satisfied that I've done the trick. Everybody in Cornwall and most people in South England have heard of the Vanishing Squire ; and thousands of noodles have been nodding their heads over crystals and tarot cards at this marvellous proof of an unseen world. I reckon the Reappearing Squire will scatter their cards and smash their crystals, so that such rubbish won't appear again in the twentieth century. I'll make the peacock trees the laughing-stock of all Europe and America."

" Well," said the lawyer, who was the first to rearrange his wits, " I'm sure we're all only too delighted to see you again, Squire ; and I quite understand your explanation and your own very natural motives in the matter. But I'm afraid I haven't got the hang of everything yet. Granted that you wanted to vanish, was it necessary to put bogus bones in the cave, so as nearly to put a halter round the neck of Dr. Brown ? And who put it there ? The statement would appear perfectly maniacal ; but so far as I can make head or tail out of anything, Dr. Brown seems to have put it there himself."

The doctor lifted his head for the first time.

" Yes ; I put the bones there," he said. " I believe I am the first son of Adam who ever manufactured all the evidence of a murder charge against himself."

It was the Squire's turn to look astonished. The old gentleman looked rather wildly from one to the other.

(Continued on page 148.)

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P.422

" Bones ! Murder charge ! " he ejaculated. " What the devil is all this ? Whose bones ? "

" Your bones, in a manner of speaking," delicately conceded the doctor. " I had to make sure you had really died, and not disappeared by magic."

The Squire in his turn seemed more hopelessly puzzled than the whole crowd of his friends had been over his own escapade. " Why not ? " he demanded. " I thought it was the whole point to make it look like magic. Why did you want me to die so much ? "

Dr. Brown had lifted his head ; and he now very slowly lifted his hand. He pointed with outstretched arm at the headland overhanging the foreshore, just above the entrance to the cave. It was the exact part of the beach where Paynter had first landed, on that spring morning when he had looked up in his first fresh wonder at the peacock trees. But the trees were gone.

The fact itself was no surprise to them ; the clearance had naturally been one of the first of the sweeping changes of the Treherne regime. But though they knew it well, they had wholly forgotten it ; and its significance returned on them suddenly like a sign in heaven.

" That is the reason," said the doctor. " I have worked for that for fourteen years."

They no longer looked at the bare promontory on which the feathery trees had once been so familiar a sight ; for they had something else to look at. Anyone seeing the Squire now would have shifted his opinion about where to find the lunatic in that crowd. It was plain in a flash that the change had fallen on him like a thunderbolt ; that he, at least, had never had the wildest notion that the tale of the Vanishing Squire had been but a prelude to that of the vanishing trees. The next half-hour was full of his ravings and expostulations, which gradually died away into demands for explanation and incoherent questions repeated again and again. He had practically to be overruled at last, in spite of the respect in which he was held, before anything like a space and silence were made in which the doctor could tell his own story. It was perhaps a singular story, of which he alone had ever had the knowledge ; and though its narration was not uninterrupted, it may be set forth consecutively in his own words.

" First, I wish it clearly understood tha I believe in nothing. I do not even give the nothing I believe a name ; or I should be an atheist. I have never had inside my head so much as a hint of heaven and hell. I think it most likely we are worms in the mud ; but I happen to be sorry for the other worms under the wheel. And I happen myself to be a sort of worm that turns when he can. If I care nothing for piety, I care less for poetry. I'm not like Ashe here, who is crammed with criminology, but has all sorts of other culture as well. I know nothing about culture, except bacteria-culture. I sometimes fancy Mr. Ashe is as much an art critic as Mr. Paynter ; only he looks for his heroes, or villains, in real life. But I am a very practical man ; and my stepping stones have been simply scientific facts. In this village I found a fact—a fever. I could not classify it ; it seemed peculiar to this corner of the coast ; it had singular reactions of delirium and mental breakdown. I studied it exactly as I should a queer case in the hospital, and corresponded and compared notes with other men of science. But nobody had even a working hypothesis about it, except of course the ignorant peasantry, who said the peacock trees were in some wild way poisonous.

" Well, the peacock trees were poisonous. The peacock trees did produce the fever. I verified that fact in the plain plodding way required, comparing all the degrees and details of a vast number of cases ; and there were a shocking number to compare. At the end of it I had discovered the thing as Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood. Everybody was the worse for being near the things ; those who came off best were exactly the exceptions that proved the rule, abnormally healthy and energetic people like the Squire and his daughter. In other words, the peasants were right. But if I put it that way, somebody will cry : ' But do you believe it was supernatural then ? ' In fact, that's what you'll all say ; and that's exactly what I complain of. I fancy hundreds of men have been left dead and diseases left undiscovered, by this suspicion of superstition, this stupid fear of fear. Unless you can see daylight through the forest of facts from the first, you won't venture into the wood at all. Unless we can promise you beforehand that there shall be what you call a natural explanation, to save your precious dignity

(Continued on page 130.)

gone after second soaking

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CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER

Edited by Arthur Mee. **2D.** *Every Thursday*

from miracles, you won't even hear the beginning of the plain tale. Suppose there isn't a natural explanation! Suppose there is, and we never find it! Suppose I haven't a notion whether there is or not! What the devil has that to do with you, or with me in dealing with the facts I do know? My own instinct is to think there is; that if my researches could be followed far enough it would be found that some horrible parody of hay-fever, some effect analogous to that of pollen, would explain all the facts. I have never found the explanation. What I have found are the facts. And the fact is that those trees on the top there dealt death right and left, as certainly as if they had been giants, standing on a hill and knocking men down in crowds with a club. It will be said that now I had only to produce my proofs and have the nuisance removed. Perhaps I might have convinced the scientific world finally, when more and more processions of dead men had passed through the village to the cemetery. But I had not got to convince the scientific world, but the Lord of the Manor. The Squire will pardon my saying that it was a very different thing. I tried it once; I lost my temper, and said things I do not defend; and I left the Squire's prejudices rooted anew, like the trees. I was confronted with one colossal coincidence that was an obstacle to all my aims. One thing made all my science sound like nonsense. It was the popular legend.

"Squire, if there were a legend of hay-fever, you would not believe in hay-fever. If there were a popular story about pollen, you would say that pollen was only a popular story. I had something against me heavier and more hopeless than the hostility of the learned; I had the support of the ignorant. My truth was hopelessly tangled up with a tale that the educated were resolved to regard as entirely a lie. I never tried to explain again; on the contrary, I apologised, affected a conversion to the common-sense view, and watched events. And all the time the lines of a larger if more crooked plan began to get clearer in my mind. I knew that Miss Vane, whether or not she were married to Mr. Treherne, as I afterwards found she was, was so much under his influence that the first day of her inheritance would be the last day of the poisonous trees. But she could not inherit, or even interfere, till the Squire died. It became simply self-evident, to a rational mind, that the Squire must die. But wishing to be humane as well as rational, I desired his death to be temporary.

"Doubtless my scheme was completed by a chapter of accidents, but I was watching for such accidents. Thus I had a foreshadowing of how the axe would figure in the tale when it was first flung at the trees; it would have surprised the woodman to know how near our minds were, and how I was but laying a more elaborate siege to the towers of pestilence. But when the Squire spontaneously rushed on what half the countryside would call certain death, I jumped at my chance. I followed him, and told him all that he has told you. I don't suppose he'll ever forgive me now, but that shan't prevent my saying that I admire him hugely for being what people would call a lunatic and what is really a sportsman. It takes rather a grand old man to make a joke in the grand style. He came down so quick from the tree he had climbed that he had no time to pull his hat off the bough it had caught in.

"At first I found I had made a miscalculation. I thought his disappearance would be taken as his death, at least after a little time; but Ashe told me there could be no formalities without a corpse. I fear I was a little annoyed, but I soon set myself to the duty of manufacturing a corpse. It's not hard for a doctor to get a skeleton; indeed, I had one, but Mr. Paynter's energy was a day too early for me, and I only got the bones into the well when he had already found it. His story gave me another chance, however; I noted where the hole was in the hat, and made a precisely corresponding hole in the skull. The reason for creating the other clues may not be so obvious. It may not yet be altogether apparent to you that I am not a fiend in human form. I could not substantiate a murder without at least suggesting a murderer, and I was resolved that if the crime happened to be traced to anybody, it should be to me. So I'm not surprised you were puzzled about the purpose of the rag round the axe, because it had no purpose, except to incriminate the man who put it there. The chase had to end with me, and when it was closing in at last the joke of it was too much for me, and I fear I took liberties with the gentleman's easel and beard. I was the only person who could risk it, being the only person who could at the last

(Continued on page 152.)

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moment produce the Squire and prove there had been no crime at all. That, gentlemen, is the true story of the peacock trees; and that bare crag up there, where the wind is whistling as it would over a wilderness, is a waste place I have laboured to make, as many men have laboured to make a cathedral.

"I don't think there is any more to say, and yet something moves in my blood and I will try to say it. Could you not have trusted a little these peasants whom you already trust so much? These men are men, and they meant something; even their fathers were not wholly fools. If your gardener told you of the trees you called him a madman, but he did not plan and plant your garden like a madman. You would not trust your woodman about these trees, yet you trusted him with all the others. Have you ever thought what all the work of the world would be like if the poor were so senseless as you think them? But no, you stuck to your rational principle. And your rational principle was that a thing must be false because thousands of men had found it true; that *because* many human eyes had been something it could not be there."

He looked across at Ashe with a sort of challenge, but though the sea-wind ruffled the old lawyer's red mane, his Napoleonic mask was unruffled; it even had a sort of beauty from its new benignity.

"I am too happy just now in thinking how wrong I have been," he answered, "to quarrel with you, doctor, about our theories. And yet, in justice to the Squire as well as myself, I should demur to your sweeping inference. I respect these peasants, I respect your regard for them; but their stories are a different matter. I think I would do anything for them but believe them. Truth and fancy, after all, are mixed in them, when in the more instructed they are separate; and I doubt if you have considered what would be involved in taking their word for anything. Half the ghosts of those who died of fever may be walking by now; and kind as these people are, I believe they might still burn a witch. No, doctor, I admit these people have been badly used, I admit they are in many ways our betters, but I still could not accept anything on their evidence."

The doctor bowed gravely and respectfully enough, and then, for the last time that day, they saw his rather sinister smile.

"Quite so," he said. "But you would have hanged me on their evidence."

And turning his back on them, as if automatically, he set his face towards the village, where for so many years he had gone his round.

Dream Children

HERE the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for Uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty, dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W——n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing, less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name"—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep.

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His Father's Son

The drama of a strange correspondence

By EDITH WHARTON

AFTER his wife's death Mason Grew took the momentous step of selling out his business and moving from Wingfield, Connecticut, to Brooklyn.

For years he had secretly nursed the hope of such a change, but had never dared to suggest it to Mrs. Grew, a woman of immutable habits. Mr. Grew himself attached to Wingfield, where he had grown up, prospered, and become what the local Press described as "prominent." He was attached to his brick house with sandstone trimmings and a cast-iron area-railing neatly sanded to match; to the similar row of houses across the street, with "trolley" wires forming a kind of aerial pathway between, and to the vista closed by the sandstone steeple of the church which he and his wife had always attended, and where their only child had been baptised.

It was hard to snap all these threads of association, yet still harder, now that he was alone, to live so far from his boy. Ronald Grew was practising law in New York, and there was no more chance of his returning to live at Wingfield than of a river's flowing inland from the sea. Therefore, to be near him his father must move; and it was characteristic of Mr. Grew, and of the situation generally, that the translation, when it took place, was to Brooklyn, and not to New York.

"Why you bury yourself in that hole I can't think," had been Ronald's comment; and Mr. Grew simply replied that rents were lower in Brooklyn, and that he had heard of a house there that would suit him. In reality he had said to himself—being the only recipient of his own confidences—that if he went to New York he might be on the boy's mind; whereas, if he lived in Brooklyn, Ronald would always have a good excuse for not popping over to see him every other day. The sociological isolation of Brooklyn, combined with its geographical nearness, presented in fact the precise conditions that Mr. Grew sought. He wanted to be near enough to New York to go there often, to feel under his feet the same pavement that Ronald trod, to sit now and then in the same theatres, and find on his breakfast table the journals which, with increasing frequency, inserted Ronald's name in the sacred bounds of the society column. It had always been a trial to Mr. Grew to have to wait twenty-four hours to read that "among those present was Mr. Ronald Grew." Now he had it with his coffee, and left it on the breakfast table to the perusal of a "hired girl" cosmopolitan enough to do it justice. In such ways Brooklyn attested the advantages of its nearness to New York, while remaining, as regards Ronald's duty to his father, as remote and inaccessible as Wingfield.

It was not that Ronald shirked his filial obligations, but rather because of his heavy sense of them that Mr. Grew so persistently sought to minimise and lighten them. It was he who insisted, to Ronald,

on the immense difficulty of getting from New York to Brooklyn.

"Any way you look at it, it makes a big hole in the day; and there's not much use in the ragged rim left. You say you're dining out next Sunday? Then I forbid you to come over here to lunch. Do you understand me, sir? You disobey at the risk of your father's malediction! Where did you say you were dining? With the Waltham Bankshires again? Why, that's the second time in three weeks, ain't it? Big blow-out, I suppose? Gold plate and orchids—opera singers in afterwards? Well, you'd be in a nice box if there was a fog on the river, and you got hung up half-way over. That'd be a handsome return for the attention Mrs. Bankshire has shown you—singling out a whipper-snapper like you twice in three weeks! (What's the daughter's name—Daisy?) No, sir—don't you come fooling round here next Sunday, or I'll set the dogs on you. And you wouldn't find me in anyhow, come to think of it. I'm lunching out myself, as it happens—yes, sir, lunching out. Is there anything especially comic in my lunching out? I don't often do it, you say? Well, that's no reason why I never should. Who with? Why, with—with old Dr. Bleaker: Dr. Eliphalet Bleaker. No, you wouldn't know about him—he's only an old friend of your mother's and mine."

Gradually Ronald's insistence became less difficult to overcome. With his customary sweetness and tact (as Mr. Grew put it) he began to "take the hint," to give in to "the old gentleman's" growing desire for solitude.

"I'm set in my ways, Ronny, that's about the size of it; I like to go tick-ticking along like a clock. I always did. And when you come bouncing in I never feel sure there's enough for dinner—or that I haven't sent Maria out for the evening. And I don't want the neighbours to see me opening my own door to my son. That's the kind of cringing snob I am. Don't give me away, will you? I want 'em to think I keep four or five powdered flunkeys in the hall day and night—same as the lobby of one of those Fifth Avenue Hotels. And if you pop over when you're not expected, how am I going to keep up the bluff?"

Ronald yielded after the proper amount of resistance—his intuitive sense, in every social transaction, of the proper amount of force to be expended, was one of the qualities his father most admired in him. Mr. Grew's perceptions in this line were probably more acute than his son suspected. The souls of short, thick-set men, with chubby features, mutton-chop whiskers, and pale eyes peering between folds of fat like almond kernels in half-split shells—souls thus encased do not reveal themselves to the casual scrutiny as delicate emotional instruments. But in spite of the disguise in which he walked, Mr. Grew vibrated exquisitely in response to every imaginative appeal; and his son Ronald was always stimulating and feeding his imagination.

Ronald, in fact, constituted Mr. Grew's one escape from the element of mediocrity which had always hemmed him in. To a man so enamoured of beauty, and so little qualified to add to its sum total, it was a wonderful privilege to have bestowed on the world such a being. Ronald's resemblance to Mr. Grew's early conception of what he himself would have liked to look might have put new life into the discredited theory of pre-natal influences. At any rate, if the young man owed his beauty, his distinction, and his winning manner to the dreams of one of his parents, it was certainly to those of Mr. Grew, who, while outwardly devoting his life to the manufacture and dissemination of Grew's Secure Suspender Buckle, moved in an enchanted inward world peopled with all the figures of romance. In this company Mr. Grew cut as brilliant a figure as any of its noble phantoms; and to see his vision of himself projected on the outer world in the shape of a brilliant, popular, conquering son, seemed, in retrospect, to give to it a belated reality. There were even moments when, forgetting his face, Mr. Grew said to himself that if he'd had "half a chance" he might have done as well as Ronald; but this only fortified his resolve that Ronald should do infinitely better.

Ronald's ability to do well almost equalled his gift of looking well. Mr. Grew constantly affirmed to himself that the boy was "not a genius"; but, barring this slight deficiency, he had almost every gift that a parent could wish. Even at Harvard he had managed to be several desirable things at once—writing poetry in the college magazine, playing delightfully "by ear," acquitting himself creditably of his studies, and yet holding his own in the sporting set that formed, as it were, the gateway of the temple of Society. Mr. Grew's idealism

did not preclude the frank desire that his son should pass through that gateway; but the wish was not prompted by material consideration. It was Mr. Grew's notion that, in the rough and hurrying current of a new civilisation, the little pools of leisure and enjoyment must nurture delicate growths, material graces as well as moral refinements, likely to be uprooted and swept away by the rush of the main torrent. He based his theory on the fact that he had liked the few " society " people he had met —had found their manners simpler, their voices more agreeable, their views more consonant with his own, than those of the leading citizens of Wingfield. But, then, he had met very few.

Ronald's sympathies needed no urging in the same direction. He took naturally, dauntlessly, to all the high and exceptional things about which his father's imagination had so long ineffectually hovered—from the start he *was* what Mr. Grew had dreamed of being. And so precise, so detailed, was Mr. Grew's vision of his own imaginary career, that as Ronald grew up, and began to travel in a widening orbit, his father had an almost uncanny sense of the extent to which that career was enacting itself before him. At Harvard, Ronald had done exactly what the hypothetical Mason Grew would have done, had not his actual self, at the same age, been working his way up in old Slagden's button factory—the institution which was later to acquire fame, and even notoriety, as the birthplace of Grew's Secure Suspender Buckle. Afterward, at a period when the actual Grew had passed from the factory to the bookkeeper's desk, his invisible double had been reading law at Columbia—precisely again what Ronald did!

But it was when the young man left the paths laid out for him by the parental hand, and cast himself boldly on the world, that his adventures began to bear the most astonishing resemblance to those of the unrealised Mason Grew. It was in New York that the scene of this hypothetical being's first exploits had always been laid; and it was in New York that Ronald was to achieve his first triumph. There was nothing small or timid about Mr. Grew's imagination; it had never stopped at anything between Wingfield and the metropolis. And the real Ronald had the same cosmic vision as his parent. He brushed aside with a contemptuous laugh his mother's entreaty that he should stay at Wingfield and continue the dynasty of the Grew Suspender Buckle. Mr. Grew knew that in reality Ronald winced at the Buckle, loathed it, blushed for his connection with it. Yet it was the Buckle that had seen him through Groton, Harvard and the Law School, and had permitted him to enter the office of a distinguished corporation lawyer, instead of being enslaved to some sordid business with quick returns. The Buckle had been Ronald's fairy god-mother—yet his father did not blame him for abhorring it. Mr. Grew himself often bitterly regretted having attached his own name to the instrument of his material success, though, at the time, his doing so had been the natural expression of his romanticism. When he invented the Buckle, and took out his patent, he and his wife both felt that to bestow their name on it was like naming a battleship or a peak of the Andes.

Mrs. Grew had never learned to know better; but Mr. Grew had discovered his error before Ronald was out of school. He read it first in a black eye of his boy's. Ronald's symmetry had been marred by the insolent fist of a fourth former whom he had chastised for alluding to his father as " Old Buckles "; and when Mr. Grew heard the epithet he understood in a flash that the Buckle was a thing to blush for. It was too late then to dissociate his name from it, or to efface from the hoardings of the entire continent the picture of two gentlemen, one contorting himself in the abject effort to repair a broken brace, while the careless ease of the other's attitude proclaimed his trust in the Secure Suspender Buckle. These records were indelible, but Ronald could at least be spared all direct connection with them; and that day Mr. Grew decided that the boy should not return to Wingfield.

" You'll see," he said to Mrs. Grew, " he'll take right hold in New York. Ronald's got my knack of taking hold," he added, throwing out his chest.

" But the way you took hold was in business," objected Mrs. Grew, who was large and literal.

Mr. Grew's chest collapsed, and he became suddenly conscious of his comic face in its rim of sandy whiskers. " That's not the only way," he said, with a touch of wistfulness which escaped his wife's analysis.

" Well, of course you could have written beautifully," she rejoined with admiring eyes.

"Written? Me!" Mr. Grew became sardonic.

"Why, those letters—weren't *they* beautiful, I'd like to know?"

The couple exchanged a glance, innocently allusive and amused on the wife's part, and charged with a sudden tragic significance on the husband's.

"Well, I've got to be going along to the office now," he merely said, dragging himself out of his chair.

This had happened while Ronald was still at school; and now Mrs. Grew slept in Wingfield Cemetery, under a life-size theological virtue of her own choosing, and Mr. Grew's prognostications as to Ronald's ability to "take right hold" in New York were being more and more brilliantly fulfilled.

II

RONALD obeyed his father's injunction not to come to luncheon on the day of the Bankshires' dinner; but in the middle of the following week Mr. Grew was surprised by a telegram from his son.

Want to see you, important matter. Expect me to-morrow afternoon.

Mr. Grew received the telegram after breakfast. To peruse it he had lifted his eye from the paragraph of the morning paper describing a fancy-dress dinner which the Hamilton Gliddens' had given the night before for the house-warming of their new Fifth Avenue palace.

"Among the couples who afterward danced in the Poets' Quadrille were Miss Daisy Bankshire, looking more than usually lovely as Laura, and Mr. Ronald Grew, as the young Petrarch."

Petrarch and Laura! Well—if anything meant anything, Mr. Grew supposed he knew what that meant. For weeks past he had noticed how constantly the names of the young people were coupled in the society notes he so insatiably devoured. Even the soulless reporter was getting into the habit of uniting them in his lists. And this Laura and Petrarch business was almost an announcement. . . .

Mr. Grew dropped the telegram, wiped his eye-glasses, and re-read the paragraph. "Miss Daisy Bankshire . . . more than usually lovely . . ." Yes; she was lovely. He had often seen her photograph in the papers—seen her represented in every attitude of the mundane game: fondling her prize bull-dog, taking a fence on her thoroughbred, dancing a gavotte, all patches and plumes, or fingering a guitar, all tulle and lilies; and once he caught a glimpse of her at the theatre. Hearing that Ronald was going to a fashionable first-night with the Bankshires, Mr. Grew had for once overcome his repugnance to following his son's movements, and had secured for himself, under the shade of the balcony, a stall whence he could observe the Bankshire box without fear of detection. Ronald had never known of his father's presence; and for three blessed hours Mr. Grew had watched his boy's handsome dark head bent above the fair head and averted shoulders that were all he could catch of Miss Bankshire's beauties.

He recalled the vision now: and it came, as usual, its ghostly double: the vision of himself bending above such a shoulder and such shining hair. Needless to say that the real Mason Grew had never found himself in so enviable a situation. The late Mrs. Grew had no more resembled Miss Daisy Bankshire than he had looked like the happy victorious Ronald. And the mystery was that from their dull faces, their dull endearments, the miracle of Ronald should have sprung. It was almost—fantastically—as though the boy had been a changeling, child of a Latmian night, whom the divine companion of Mr. Grew's early reveries had secretly laid in the cradle of the Wingfield bedroom while Mr. and Mrs. Grew slept the sleep of conjugal indifference.

The young Mason Grew had not at first accepted this astral episode as the complete cancelling of his claims on romance. He, too, had grasped at the high-hung glory; and, with his tendency to reach too far when he reached at all, had singled out the prettiest girl in Wingfield. When he recalled his stammered confession of love his face still tingled under her cool, bright stare. His audacity had struck her dumb; and when she recovered her voice it was to fling a taunt at him.

"Don't be too discouraged, you know—have you ever thought of trying Addie Wicks?"

All Wingfield would have understood the gibe: Addie Wicks was the dullest girl in town. And a year later he had married Addie Wicks. . . .

He looked from the perusal of Ronald's telegram with this memory in his mind. Now at last his dream was coming true!

His boy would taste of the joys that had mocked his thwarted youth and his dull middle-age. And it was fitting that they should be realised in Ronald's destiny.

Ronald was made to take happiness boldly by the hand and lead it home like a bride. He had the carriage, the confidence, the high faith in his fortune, that compel the wilful stars. And, thanks to the Buckle, he would also have the background of material elegance that became his conquering person. Since Mr. Grew had retired from business his investments had prospered, and he had been saving up his income for just such a purpose. His own wants were few: he had brought the Wingfield furniture to Brooklyn, and his sitting-room was a replica of that in which the long years of his married life had been spent. Even the florid carpet on which Ronald's first footsteps had been taken was carefully matched when it became too threadbare. And on the marble centre-table, with its beaded cover and bunch of dyed pampas grass, lay the illustrated Longfellow and the copy of Ingersoll's lectures which represented literature to Mr. Grew when he had led home his bride. In the light of Ronald's romance, Mr. Grew found himself re-living, with mingled pain and tenderness, all the poor prosaic incidents of his own personal history.

Curiously enough, with this new splendour on them they began to emit a faint ray of their own. His wife's armchair, in its usual place by the fire, recalled her placid unperceiving presence, seated opposite to him during the long, drowsy years; and he felt her kindness, her equanimity, where formerly he had only ached at her obtuseness. And from the chair he glanced up at the discoloured photograph on the wall above, with a withered laurel wreath suspended on a corner of the frame. The photograph represented a young man with a poetic necktie and untrammelled hair, leaning against a Gothic chair back, a roll of music in his hand; and beneath was scrawled a bar of Chopin, with the words: "Adieu, Adèle."

The portrait was that of the great pianist, Fortuné Dolbrowski; and its presence on the wall of Mr. Grew's sitting-room commemorated the only exquisite hour of his life except that of Ronald's birth. It was some time before the latter event, a few months only after Mr. Grew's marriage, that he had taken his wife to New York to hear the great Dolbrowski. Their evening had been magically beautiful, and even Addie, roused from her usual inexpressiveness, had waked into a momentary semblance of life. "I never—I never——" she gasped out when they had regained their hotel bedroom, and sat staring back entranced at the evening's vision. Her large face was pink and tremulous, and she sat with her hands on her knees, forgetting to roll up her bonnet strings and prepare her curl-papers.

"I'd like to write him just how I felt—I wish I knew how!" she burst out in a final effervescence of emotion.

Her husband lifted her head and looked at her.

"Would you? I feel that way, too," he said with a sheepish laugh. And they continued to stare at each other through a transfiguring mist of sound.

The scene rose before Mr. Grew as he gazed up at the pianist's photograph. "Well, I owe her that anyhow—poor Addie!" he said, with a smile at the inconsequences of fate. With Ronald's telegram in his hand he was in a mood to count his mercies.

III

"A CLEAR twenty-five thousand a year: that's what you can tell 'em with my compliments," said Mr. Grew, glancing complacently across the centre-table at his boy.

It struck him that Ronald's gift for looking his part in life had never so completely expressed itself. Other young men, at such a moment, would have been red, damp, tight about the collar; but Ronald's cheek was a shade paler, and the contrast made his dark eyes more expressive.

"A clear twenty-five thousand; yes, sir—that's what I always meant you to have."

Mr. Grew leaned carelessly back, his hands thrust in his pockets, as though to divert attention from the agitation of his features. He had often pictured himself rolling out that phrase to Ronald, and now that it was on his lips he could not control their tremor.

Ronald listened in silence, lifting a hand to his slight moustache, as though he, too, wished to hide some involuntary betrayal of emotion. At first Mr. Grew took his silence for an expression of gratified surprise; but as it prolonged itself it became less easy to interpret.

" I—see here, my boy; did you expect more? Isn't it enough?" Mr. Grew cleared his throat. " Do they expect more?" he asked nervously. He was hardly able to face the pain of inflicting a disappointment on Ronald at the very moment when he had counted on putting the final touch to his bliss.

Ronald moved uneasily in his chair and his eyes wandered upward to the laurel-wreathed photograph of the pianist.

" Is it the money, Ronald? Speak out, my boy. We'll see, we'll look round—I'll manage somehow."

" No, no," the young man interrupted, abruptly raising his hand as though to check his father.

Mr. Grew recovered his cheerfulness. " Well, what's the trouble then, if she's willing?"

Ronald shifted his position again and finally rose from his seat and wandered across the room.

" Father," he said, coming back, " there's something I've got to tell you. I can't take your money."

Mr. Grew sat speechless a moment, staring blankly at his son; then he emitted a laugh. " My money? What are you talking about? What's this about my money? Why, it ain't mine, Ronny; it's all yours—every cent of it!"

The young man met his tender look with a gesture of tragic refusal.

" No, no, it's not mine—not even in the sense you mean. Not in any sense. Can't you understand my feeling so?"

" Feeling so? I don't know how you're feeling. I don't know what you're talking about. Are you too proud to touch any money you haven't earned? Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

" No. It's not that. You must know—"

Mr. Grew flushed to the rim of his bristling whiskers. " Know? Know what? Can't you speak out?"

Ronald hesitated, and the two faced each other for a long strained moment, during which Mr. Grew's congested countenance grew gradually pale again.

" What's the meaning of this? Is it because you've done something . . . something you're ashamed of . . . ashamed to tell me?" he gasped; and walking around the table he laid his hand gently on his son's shoulder. " There's nothing you can't tell me, my boy."

" It's not that. Why do you make it so hard for me?" Ronald broke out with passion. " You must have known this was sure to happen sooner or later."

" Happen? What was sure to hap——?" Mr. Grew's question wavered on his lip and passed into a tremulous laugh. " Is it something I've done that you don't approve of? Is it—is it the Buckle you're ashamed of, Ronald Grew?"

Ronald laughed, too, impatiently. " The Buckle? No, I'm not ashamed of the Buckle; not any more than you are," he returned with a flush. " But I'm ashamed of all I owe to it—all I owe to you—when—when——" He broke off and took a few distracted steps across the room. " You might make this easier for me," he protested, turning back to his father.

" Make what easier? I know less and less what you're driving at," Mr. Grew groaned.

Ronald's walk had once more brought him beneath the photograph on the wall. He lifted his head for a moment and looked at it; then he looked again at Mr. Grew.

" Do you suppose I haven't always known?"

" Known——?"

" Even before you gave me those letters at the time of my mother's death—even before that, I suspected. I don't know how it began . . . perhaps from little things you let drop, you and she . . . and resemblances that I couldn't help seeing . . . in myself . . . How on earth could you suppose I shouldn't guess? I always thought you gave me those letters as a way of telling me——"

Mr. Grew rose slowly from his chair. " The letters? Do you mean Dolbrowski's letters?"

Ronald nodded with white lips. " You must remember giving them to me the day after the funeral."

Mr. Grew nodded back. " Of course, I wanted you to have everything your mother valued."

" Well—how could I help knowing after that?"

" Knowing what?" Mr. Grew stood staring helplessly at his son. Suddenly he caught at a clue that seemed to confront it with a deeper difficulty. " You thought—you thought those letters . . . Dolbrowski's letters . . . you thought they meant . . ."

" Oh, it wasn't only the letters. There are so many other signs. My love of music—my—all my feelings about life . . . and art

. . . And when you gave me the letters I thought you must mean me to know."

Mr. Grew had grown quiet. His lips were firm, and his small eyes looked out steadily from their creased lids.

"To know that you were Fortuné Dolbrowski's son?"

Ronald made a mute sign of assent.

"I see. And what did you intend to do?"

"I meant to wait till I could earn my living, and then repay you . . . as far as I can ever repay you . . . for what you'd spent on me. . . . But now that there's a chance of my marrying . . . and that your generosity overwhelms me . . . I'm obliged to speak."

"I see," said Mr. Grew again. He let himself down into his chair, looking steadily and not unkindly at the young man. "Sit down, too, Ronald. Let's talk."

Ronald made a protesting movement. "Is anything to be gained by it? You can't change me—change what I feel. The reading of those letters changed my whole life—I was a boy till then: they made a man of me. From that moment I understood myself." He paused, and then looked up at Mr. Grew's face. "Don't imagine that I don't appreciate your kindness—your extraordinary generosity. But I can't go through life in disguise. And I want you to know that I have not won Daisy under false pretences——"

Mr. Grew started up with the first expletive Ronald had ever heard on his lips. "You damned fool, you, you haven't told her——?"

Ronald raised his head with pride. "Oh, you don't know her, sir! She thinks no worse of me for knowing my secret. She is above and beyond all such conventional prejudices. She's proud of my parentage"—he straightened his slim young shoulders—"as I'm proud of it . . . yes, sir, proud of it . . ."

Mr. Grew sank back into his seat with a dry laugh. "Well, you ought to be. You come of good stock. And you're your father's son, every inch of you!" He laughed again, as though the humour of the situation grew on him with its closer contemplation.

"Yes, I've always felt that," Ronald murmured, gravely.

"Your father's son, and no mistake." Mr. Grew leaned forward. "You're the son of as big a fool as yourself. And here he sits, Ronald Grew!"

The young man's colour deepened to crimson; but his reply was checked by Mr. Grew's decisive gesture. "Here he sits, with all your young nonsense still alive in him. Don't you begin to see the likeness? If you don't, I'll tell you the story of those letters."

Ronald stared. "What do you mean? Don't they tell their own story?"

"I suppose they did when I gave them to you; but you've given it a twist that needs straightening out." Mr. Grew squared his elbows on the table, and looked at the young man across the gift-books and dyed pampas grass. "I wrote all the letters that Dolbrowski answered."

Ronald gave back his look of frowning perplexity. "You wrote them? I don't understand. His letters are all addressed to my mother."

"Yes. And he thought he was corresponding with her."

"But my mother—what did she think?"

Mr. Grew hesitated, puckering his thick lids. "Well, I guess she kinder thought it was a joke. Your mother didn't think about things much."

Ronald continued to bend a puzzled frown on the question. "I don't understand," he reiterated.

Mr. Grew cleared his throat with a nervous laugh. "Well, I don't know as you ever will—quite. But this is the way it came about. I had a toughish time of it when I was young. Oh, I don't mean so much the fight I had to put up to make my way—there was always plenty of fight in me. But the inside of me didn't attract callers." He laughed again, with an apologetic gesture toward his broad blinking face. "When I went round with the other young fellows I was always the forlorn hope—the one that had to eat the drumsticks and dance with the left-overs. As sure as there was a blighter at a picnic, I had to swing her, and feed her, and drive her home. And all the time I was mad after all the things you've got—poetry and music and all the joy-for-ever business. So there were the pair of us—my face and my imagination—chained together, and fighting, and hating each other like poison.

"Then your mother came along and took pity on me. It sets up a gawky fellow to find a girl who ain't ashamed to be seen walking with him Sundays. And I was grateful to your mother, and we got along first-rate. Only I couldn't say things to her

—and she couldn't answer. Well—one day, a few months after we were married, Dolbrowski came to New York, and the whole place went wild about him. I'd never heard any good music, but I'd always had an inkling of what it must be like, though I couldn't tell you to this day how I knew. Well, your mother read about him in the papers, too, and she thought it'd be the swagger thing to go to New York and hear him play—so we went . . . I'll never forget that evening. Your mother wasn't easily stirred up—she never seemed to need to let off steam. But that night she seemed to understand the way I felt. And when we got back to the hotel she said to me: 'I'd like to tell him how I feel. I'd like to sit right down and write to him.'

"'Would you?' I said. 'So would I.'

"There was paper and pens there before us, and I pulled a sheet toward me, and began to write. 'Is this what you'd like to say to him?' I asked her when the letter was done. And she got pink and said: 'I don't understand it, but it's lovely.' And she copied it out and signed her name to it, and sent it."

Mr. Grew paused, and Ronald sat silent, with lowered eyes.

"That's how it began; and that's where I thought it would end. But it didn't, because Dolbrowski answered. His first letter was dated January 10th, 1872. I guess you'll find them correct. Well, I went back to hear him again, and I wrote him after the performance, and he answered again. And after that we kept it up for six months. Your mother always copied the letters and signed them. She seemed to think it was a kinder joke, and she was proud of answering my letters. But she never went back to New York to hear him, though I saved up enough to give her the treat again. She was too lazy, and she let me go without her. I heard him three times in New York; and in the spring he came to Wingfield and played once at the Academy. Your mother was sick and couldn't go; so I went alone. After the performance I meant to get one of the directors to take me in to see him; but when the time came, I just went back home and wrote to him instead. And the month after, before he went back to Europe, he sent your mother a last little note, and that picture hanging up there. . . ."

Mr. Grew paused again, and both men lifted their eyes to the photograph.

"Is that all?" Ronald slowly asked.

"That's all—every bit of it," said Mr. Grew.

"And my mother—my mother never even spoke to Dolbrowski?"

"Never. She never even saw him but that once in New York at his concert."

The blood crept again to Ronald's face. "Are you sure of that, sir?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"Sure as I am that I'm sitting here. Why, she was too lazy to look at his letters after the first novelty wore off. She copied the answers just to humour me—but she always said she couldn't understand what we wrote."

"But how could you go on with such a correspondence? It's incredible!"

Mr. Grew looked at his son thoughtfully. "I suppose it is, to you. You've only had to put out your hand and get the things I was starving for—music, and good talk, and ideas. Those letters gave me all that. You've read them, and you know that Dolbrowski was not only a great musician but a great man. There was nothing beautiful he didn't see, nothing fine he didn't feel. For six months I breathed air, and I've lived on it ever since. Do you begin to understand a little now?"

"Yes—a little. But why write in my mother's name? Why make it appear like a sentimental correspondence?"

Mr. Grew reddened to his bald temples. "Why, I tell you it began that way, as a kinder joke. And when I saw that first letter pleased and interested him, I was afraid to tell him—I couldn't tell him. Do you suppose he'd gone on writing if he'd seen me, Ronny?"

Ronald suddenly looked at him with new eyes. "But he must have thought your letters beautiful—to go on as he did," he broke out.

"Well—I did my best," said Mr. Grew, modestly.

Ronald pursued the idea. "Where are all your letters, I wonder? Weren't they returned to you at his death?"

Mr. Grew laughed. "Lord, no. I guess he had trunks and trunks full of better ones. I guess queens and empresses wrote to him."

"I should have liked to see your letters," the young man insisted.

"Well, they weren't bad," said Mr. Grew drily. "But I'll tell you one thing, Ronny," he added. Ronald raised his head with a quick glance, and Mr. Grew continued:

" I'll tell you where the best of those letters is—it's in you. If it hadn't been for that one look at life I couldn't have made you what you are. Oh, I know you've done a good deal of your own making—but I've been there behind you all the time. And you'll never know the work I've spared you. Fortuné Dolbrowski helped me to do that. I never saw things in little again after I'd looked at 'em with him. And I tried to give you the big view from the start . . . So that's what became of my letters."

Mr. Grew paused, and for a long time Ronald sat motionless, his elbows on the table, his face dropped on his hands.

Suddenly Mr. Grew's touch fell on his shoulder.

" Look at here, Ronald Grew—do you want me to tell you how you're feeling at this minute? Just a mite let down, after all, at the idea that you ain't the romantic figure you'd got to think yourself . . . Well, that's natural enough, too; but I'll tell you what it proves. It proves you're my son right enough, if any more proof was needed. For it's just the kind of fool nonsense I used to feel at your age—and if there's anybody here to laugh at it's myself, and not you. And you can laugh at me just as much as you like . . ."

Summer Sunrise

THE shore is washed with green and gold,
The waves are crowned with ivory;
And from the shepherd's distant fold
There drifts a quiet melody.

And drifting on a summer sea
The sun his yellow carpet flings—
The clouds are floating restlessly
Like giant gold and satin wings.

And winging now the burnished sky
The seabirds fly their deathless way,
Swift with the morning ecstacy
Along the path of quivering day.

And, tremulous, the morning throws
A splendour on the sea-girt land—
The wind is singing as it blows
An amber dust along the sand.

Bright grows the hour with dawning gold,
With song the woods are echoing,
The shepherd watches from his fold
A summer day's awakening.

CLARENCE WINCHESTER.

Fourteen Fathoms By Quetta Rock

When the sea gives up its dead

By RANDOLPH BEDFORD

THE palm-fronds threshed softly. Nigh to midnight the land breeze became too strong for anything but the frangipanni scent; the palm-fronds threshed through the air saturated with moonlight; the red lamp on the jetty showed as a purple stain.

The last of the pilots of Torres Straits went to bed; the Grand Hotel of Thursday Island closed its bar; but the two barefoot men on the verandah talked on the topic that had lasted since dusk—the wreck of the *Pandora*, and one man, Pipon, tried to soothe the other, Moresby, who talked without ceasing of the wreck and twenty thousand pounds, worth of pearls.

"Can we get a launch, Jim?" he asked.

"I told you no," replied Pipon. "Bear up, old man; y' can have a lugger."

"A lugger and a dead calm? It would be worse than waiting here."

"Well, quiet a bit!"

"Quiet! How can I be—when I am in a fever to be there?"

He looked south as if trying to make out the coast of Australia, now the ghost of a shadow in the moon haze and sea blur.

"What could you do if you were Martin?"

"I could stand by the wreck; I could—"

"You couldn't do any good. It's lucky Phil Regard is coming to-morrow. He's the British India diver. He'll do all there is to be done."

"My pearls, Tom! The big one and nine ounces of little ones. Oyley was bringing them up. What depths did the *Pandora* sink in?"

"Nobody knows, old man, or how she went. The skipper was a good man—exempt, too. Knew every key and every inch of reef—and there's millions of 'em."

"It was my rotten luck, Tom, to miss the *Pandora* by five minutes and then pick up the *Maranea* to catch her here, and find when I did get here that she'd sunk fifty or a hundred miles south. And there's my pearls—Oyley was taking charge of them—and then I missed the ship. Oh, gimme a raft and I'll start!"

"Not you! Come on, take a fool's advice and sleep. You'll leave it all to Phil Regard."

The grass trees rustled softly to the poinciana as the men went to bed; the breeze strengthened to a wind and replaced perfume with a taste of salt; from the verandah above a man began to whimper—a man that had seen death and terror and was now dreaming it all over again and shrieking out the story in his recurrent nightmare—the one survivor of the *Pandora*, who had been picked up by a pearling lugger.

"She's going! Two minutes—you can't get the boats out of the chocks. Why didn't they have boat practice? You can't! You can't! Don't scream, women—dear women, don't scream—it's better to drown than—ah, my God, the sharks! the sharks!"

¶

BRUCE, the pilot of Torres Straits, boarded that slow, comfortable, old-time high-pooped steamer of the tea-clipper type, the *Airlie*, at Goode Island, and brought her up in the early dawn to the wharf at Thursday. A big, brown-eyed man was the first to land; he was a man in a hurry—in a hurry for news, at least. He waited for neither bath nor breakfast, but aroused an irritated postmaster and begged so for telegrams that the postmaster gave him his mail long before the beginning of office hours. There were many newspapers, and he did not look at them; a dozen letters, all man-directed and official, and he put them in his pocket. A bitter disappointment settled on his face—the letter from

the beloved was not there. He found new hope in the telegrams. Alas! They were as the letters; and his heart was heavy then. This diver, who knew no fear that he could not fight down, fought against his disappointment and could not conquer it.

"I telegraphed her from Darwin, and she hasn't wired a reply. She's thoughtless, not cruel, not cruel—my girl."

He took from his pocket-book a photograph; looked at it and put it back again.

"God bless her! I'll telegraph again, and in seven days we'll be together—for a month, anyhow. But—she might have made sure of not missing the post; a letter would make me a king to-day."

He returned to duty by taking a telegram from his pockets, and a fierce resentment held him for a moment as he read it:

"Pandora" sunk; locate wreck; if not impossible, recover gold, ship's papers. B.P. provide tug and tender; made splendid terms.

So he would not see her in a week—happiness was to be postponed again. He thought of the long two months of salvage diving in the Flores Sea. Three months since he had seen her, and now there was to be another fortnight of hunger for her!

But hope came to his comfort. "Another year and I'll have made enough to retire on, with this new chance. Then no separation!"

So he went to Burns, Philip and arranged for the departure of the little steamer, hired diving tenders and had his diving gear brought from the *Airlie's* hold. It was then that Moresby found him—Moresby of the drowned pearls; and the commission made Phil Regard almost gay.

"Oyley had 'em," said Moresby. "I gave them to him to mind because I was going on a spree in Brisbane."

"Was he straight, d'ye think?"

"I think so. He put 'em in a little steel box in his trunk—he had his own pearls in the box—and his wife had the key on a chain round her neck."

"What was the number of his cabin, and what was he like?"

"A dark, red-moustached chap—cabin number 41-43 B, port side, near the music room."

"You know the ship?"

"I tell you I sailed on her from Sydney to Brisbane and lost my passage at Brisbane through going to the races. I gave the pearls to Oyley when I was going ashore. But you will get 'em again, mate?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows where she foundered. But if I do?"

"Five hundred pounds."

With the lack of ceremony characteristic of the latitude, every man in the bar joined in the conversation.

"Five hundred pounds!" said Druce, the pilot. "Five hundred pounds for dredgin' fifteen or twenty thousand pounds out o' the Pacific Ocean! It's worth that to find the old hulk that hit the rock somewhere, and did me out o' pilot fees."

"I thought it wouldn't be hard to find the wreck," said Moresby. "If——"

"Oh," replied Druce, "if your aunt had whiskers she'd be your uncle. Why, I know ten wrecks about here that no man knows the name of—ships that were never missed. You know, too, don't you, Dan'l?"

An old man, bent and wizened, replied quaveringly, "I've seen below me—when I've been down—old Spanish ships an' old Dutch ships an' old Portugees down below; me in twenty fathoms water an' them deep below, me man——"

"Twenty fathoms—too much," said the big diver. "I've got a girl at home and she wants me. Fifteen fathoms is all I care to go."

"Aa—ah," said the old diver, nipping with his strong and crooked fingers the arm and leg muscles of Phil Regard, "I was as strong and straight as ye; but deep divin' an' showin' off above the other min, an' takin' no notice o' the shootin' pains in me legs—callin' it rheumatics, an' all the time 'tis the paralyzer warnin' ye. An' then twenty-three fathom I went, an' hauled up—I was a cripple."

He laughed as he spoke, but there was in his eye a tear of sorrow for his own dead strength; and, to cover his self-pity, he said, with a feeble attempt at gaiety:

"But 'tis only here I am a cripple! Put me down in fifteen or twenty fathom and give me the pressure on me skin again an' a four-knot tide, an' I'll fly along the floorin' of the sea like a sunbird."

"And you're offering five hundred pounds for the chance of that?" said Druce to Moresby. "Open your heart, Moresby."

"A thousand, then," said Moresby. "I want to be fair, and it's all to nothing."

"It isn't," said Phil Regard. "I've got to go below on another contract, and you think I've only got to open a cabin door and take a key from some poor dead woman and open a box. But that means two extra

corners to go round, and the more corners the more chances of fouling. It's your pearls to my life. I want a certainty."

"Here y' are, then," said Moresby. "A hundred pounds for opening the cabin door and I'll take your word for it, and a thousand if you bring back the pearls."

"It's a deal," agreed Phil Regard.

The warning bell of the *Airlie* clanged, and Druce departed to his pilotage. Phil Regard, as yet only half resigned, saw the steamer that should have borne him south disappear down the channel, rounding the Residency, and so away to open sea, then he resolutely put regrets behind him and went to his tug and tender to prepare for his attempt to find a few thousand tons of foundered metal in an immensity of blue.

The survivor of the *Pandora* had become quiet enough to talk of the wreck.

"I was steerage steward," he said. "Mister, I can't think! Stay by me, mister—don't leave me alone."

"Hold on to my coat, if you like. I'll stand by."

"We never had a boat practice—rottin' in the chocks, the boats were. It was about eleven at night—moonlight, quiet; y' could hear the scrapin' of shovels in the stoke-hole on the flat sheets, and the noise came up the ventilators. An' not a ripple. An' there I'm smoking by the rail, waitin' till I can sneak out on the boat deck to sleep—the glory hole being so hot. An' then it comes. It seemed to get her amidships—that was because she was drawing a lot more water aft. Only one man came out of the engine room. The quiet people in the cabins had the best death. Sharks got all the deck lot. She ran a minute or two an' I saw the water risin' closer up—an' loosed a raft and went over. It was like hell, mister, the howls. Her decks blew up amidships. . . . An' then on the raft I see white fire cutting the water all over, crisscrossin' it. It was sharks. An' then a yell, an' more crisscrossin' of fire, an' another yell."

"I know! I know!" said Phil Regard, soothingly. "Don't think of it! Help me. Tell me where you think she went down."

"I can't help thinkin' of it. Oh—oh!"

"Steady! Steady! Take a pull at yourself. Where did she go down?"

"A girl of twenty or so—I heard her singing in the saloon the night before—a song about 'Mine, Forever Mine,' an' her husband lookin' at her as if he was dyin' for her while she was singin'. He was swimmin' with her when the sharks took him; an' I beat the sea with me 'ands an' brought the raft close, an' I was bringin' her up to the raft—swish! comes the shark fire, an' she went, too."

The diver's eyes grew moist at that; he thought of his beloved safe at home, and the tragedy touched him nearly. But he said again:

"Where's the *Pandora*?"

"I drifted to an island, an' then I went mad, an' the lugger found me."

"To-day is Wednesday."

"When did the *Pandora* sink? Now, think—listen! We may pick up somebody yet. Tell me."

"She sank on Monday night."

"Where?"

"We made twelve knots to Cape Grenville; then we slowed to ten."

"What time at Cape Grenville?"

The survivor of the *Pandora* wrinkled his brows as if thought were a physical pain, and replied: "Twelve o'clock in the mornin'. Y' can't find her—she's got no masts, on'y hydraulic winchpoles."

Phil Regard, with the dividers in his hand, said inquiringly:

"And she struck at eleven in the night?"

"It might have been later."

"We'll go on that. Where were you picked up?"

"The lugger came from Bushy Island."

Regard pricked off one hundred and ten miles on the chart. "Somewhere east of Newcastle Bay," he said.

¶

BEFORE noon he had left Thursday Island, taking the direct track with his light-draft tugboat east between Tuesday and Horn Islands; and then, after easting Mount Adolphus Island and thridding the reefs to the south of it, steering south through the turquoise of shallow water and into the sapphire of deep sea, he ran south to Bushby Island and then east over reefs and then north again, and then west, and then zig-zag. And the next day he drove slowly over a blackness in the coral bed; a monstrous black thing surrounded by lazy sharks; the *Pandora*—almost on an even keel and sunk in fourteen fathoms.

With a little reluctance, Regard made the preparations necessary for such as dive in dress and helmet, and shaved the

moustache that had grown since he had dived in Flores Seas. The growing of the moustache had been an innocent vanity for the pleasure of his wife, who objected to his professionally beardless face, just as the new suit was for her benefit and not to be worn until the day of happy meeting, that he might shine all freshly in her eyes. Then, in the warm shadow of the white awning he stripped and donned the many woollen undergarments and the canvas dress, with its water-tight red-rubber bands at wrists and ankles.

The tender put on his feet the great brass-toed boots of twenty-eight pounds weight; and when he had climbed to the ladder and placed his feet upon the rungs, they screwed his twenty-eight-pound copper helmet on the collar-ring and hung thirty-eight pounds of lead upon his breast and thirty-eight pounds of lead at his back. Lifeline, piping, corselet, helmet, brass boots and leaden weight complete, the men at the pump began to turn; the tender screwed the face-glass into the helmet and tapped upon it as a signal; the pumps lifted the pressure of the weights from the diver's chest. The air thudded irritatingly into the copper prison that was the helmet; the sense of confinement and the close smell of the natural breathing element of man unnaturally compressed, returned to Phil Regard. He thought of the wife in Sydney—the last thought of the divinity before bracing himself to work that had the chance of death in it always, though use had brought danger into contempt; then he opened the valve and dropped easily and gently into the caresses of the water.

The black corpse of the *Pandora* seemed to rise to him. He closed the valve and sank as through a cataract of feathers. Avoiding the deck, he dropped to the bottom for a survey of the hull. Moving lightly as a feather-weight, Regard studied the situation.

All about him stretched tangles of seaweed and coral with white walks between the spongy copses and the brakes. A yellow water snake followed his every movement with curious imitation, and white fish circled around his helmet so that a green hand must have become dizzy. From a rift in the rock wavered the tentacles of a devilfish, feeling its way to crime with every cup and sucker . . . . .

The weight of ocean pressed the diver softly in his armour of the air; his body felt as if stroked by the silky hands of the caressing sea. And then from the great tunnel in the hull of the *Pandora* came floating the horrors of the deep.

Used as he was to these cruel cowards, in the light of the story of the bride who had died in the wreck, they held for him a new horror, and for a moment he was afraid. Their gorged habit, their slow, plethoric movements, their dull eyes, forgetting for a moment to be greedy, told the tale. Regard felt almost physically sick. All those eyes looked at him threateningly, contemptuously; the little fish that swam up to his face-glass and gazed at him did not seem to be frightened as quickly as usual by the movement of his hands.

The sharks came nearer, and Regard, lifting the rubber wristband, shot air at them in a succession of silver bullets, and the cowards became energetic and fled. A carpet-bag shark, the incarnation of filthy malevolence, hovered above him until Regard turned the escape-valve on his helmet and shot a madness of fear into the horrible thing.

He finished his survey of the hull with difficulty. For an hour Regard rested and fed; then he went to the ladder, and was loaded and imprisoned again, and sank to the deck of the *Pandora*.

His retinue of enemies left him at the entrance to the saloon; but the small fish, their brilliance seeming to light the half gloom, swam into the depths and in and out at the port holes—" like schoolboys playing a game," thought Phil Regard. Even there some little things had begun already to benefit by the fall of greatness; little pearl shells as big as a thumb nail had here spun their byssus to tie them to the saloon stairs, hiding their weakness in this unexpected asylum.

" All this death to make a safe hiding place for a shell," thought Regard bitterly, as he walked on tiptoe through this silent world where all values of vision were distorted.

He talked to himself and the words reverberated to him from the helmet: " I'll bring dynamite and a wire down and blow the specie-room open, rig a winch, and haul out the gold boxes. That'll be to-morrow. And while I'm here I'll do the horrible job—Moresby's pearls."

He went back to the saloon stairs. Above it a great grey shape hung watchfully, patiently, as if it had all eternity to wait in. Regard, with never a quickening of the

pulse, fired the silver bullets from his wrist-band, and the grey shape backed and fled. Regard laughed and went on to find Moresby's pearls.

He opened a cabin door; two fish fled through the porthole and the body of a woman came at him in the swirl of the water. The dead face struck his helmet. Regard cried out in horror, and backed away. But in a moment he caught his courage and closed the porthole; then he shut the cabin door again and went to the next. He could not distinguish the letter denoting the corridor nor the number either.

He opened an inner cabin and a drowned man came out and struck him. He opened another and there were in it a dead man and a dead woman trying with her floating skirts to hide a little child from the sea. Horror gripped the diver as with fingers of cold steel.

Yet his duty was to be done, and he did it. He found B corridor, and the first cabin had in it a dead girl with her hands clasped as if she still prayed. He closed the cabin reverently and came to another, in which an old man and an old woman had died in their bed places; and then to an outer cabin opposite the one he had first entered. The light was better there; he saw that this was B 41 at last.

The lock of B 41 did not yield to the lifting of the handle, so Regard inserted the point of his small axe between the door and the beading and levered it open. Two bodies, those of a man and a woman—the man's as if he had died standing, the woman's in the lower berth floating up against the wires of the upper berth—moved queerly in the disturbed liquid, as if they were alive.

"Porthole closed," muttered Regard to himself, trying not to look at the dead for a moment. "He had the fan going—the lever's on the top speed."

He looked at the body of the man, and turned him around in the water.

"That'll be the man Moresby gave the pearls to. Oyley was the name, and he looks it. There's the trunk under the berth. And this poor soul has the key round her neck. I can't do it. But I promised. I'll do it to-morrow. No; better now—get it done with. Forgive—whoever you are, forgive me. Young, too, and pretty." With a shaking hand and covering his face, he touched the woman's neck, and there he felt the necklet and the key.

"It's horrible. I'll have to use both hands for the fastening."

As if he were physically afraid of it, he looked back at the sinister dead man floating near the porthole; then, swiftly and without looking, he unfastened the necklet and held it up—a necklet and a key. The movement floated the body from its position against the springs of the upper berth; it turned upright, floating by his head—through the little circle of the face-glass its dead eyes looked sorrowfully into his own.

And then—madness! Unbelief! Doubt! Unbelief again! And again madness, clamoured through his brain. The air seemed to be withdrawn; the helmet became a mountain of copper; the weights upon his back and breast were each a ton of lead. He looked at the necklet—yes, it was so! He had given it. He released it, and it sank to the ooze upon the sodden carpet. He looked at the bracelet of opal before the mirror, and recognised it, too; and then at the dead woman gazing at him mournfully with eyes that seemed to plead: "Forgive; I have been punished and repented so; forgive."

Still unbelieving, but stunned, he pushed the dead man through the door. Then he turned back and re-entered the cabin. There could be no doubt—no doubt!

He left her there and fastened the cabin door behind him. And then his heart broke.

He could not live! With his last conscious instinct he hacked with uncertain hand at the airpipe and missed it; then the weight of all the ocean settled on his heart and he wavered to the floor.

He had a conscientious tender. At that sudden jag upon the life-line the tender hauled carefully, and by that luck which shames the best judgment, drew Philip Regard safely through the alleyway to the deck of the *Pandora*, and up to sunlight.

But they might as well have left him there, for the strong man who had dived never returned to the surface.

"Beats me!" said Druce, looking pityingly at the withered wreck that sat every day and through all the daylight hours of every day, upon the verandah of Thursday Island Hospital. "Can't understand it. A fine, big, strong world-beater of a man paralysed in fourteen fathoms. It beats me!"

Blundell's Improvement

Two clever plotters and a sudden change of tactics

By W. W. JACOBS

VENIA TURNBULL in a quiet, unobtrusive fashion was enjoying herself. The cool living-room at Turnbull's farm was a delightful contrast to the hot sunshine without, and the drowsy humming of bees floating in at the open window was charged with hints of slumber to the middle-aged. From her seat by the window she watched with amused interest the efforts of her father—kept from his Sunday afternoon nap by the assiduous attentions of her two admirers—to maintain his politeness.

"Father was so pleased to see you both come in," she said, softly; "it's very dull for him here of an afternoon with only me."

"I can't imagine anybody being dull with only you," said Sergeant Dick Daly, turning a bold brown eye upon her.

Mr. John Blundell scowled; this was the third time the sergeant had said the thing that he would have liked to say if he had thought of it.

"I don't mind being dull," remarked Mr. Turnbull casually.

Neither gentleman made any comment.

"I like it," pursued Mr. Turnbull, longingly; "always did, from a child."

The two young men looked at each other; then they looked at Venia; the sergeant assumed an expression of careless ease, while John Blundell sat his chair like a human limpet. Mr. Turnbull almost groaned as he remembered his tenacity.

"The garden's looking very nice," he said, with a pathetic glance round.

"Beautiful," assented the sergeant. "I saw it yesterday."

"Some o' the roses on that big bush have opened a bit more since then," said the farmer.

Sergeant Daly expressed his gratification, and said that he was not surprised. It was only ten days since he had arrived in the village on a visit to a relative, but in that short space of time he had, to the great discomfort of Mr. Blundell, made himself wonderfully at home at Mr. Turnbull's. To Venia he related strange adventures by sea and land, and on subjects of which he was sure the farmer knew nothing he was a perfect mine of information. He began to talk in low tones to Venia, and the heart of Mr. Blundell sank within him as he noted her interest. Their voices sank to a gentle murmur, and the sergeant's sleek, well-brushed head bent closer to that of his listener. Relieved from his attentions, Mr. Turnbull fell asleep without more ado.

Blundell sat neglected, the unwilling witness of a flirtation he was powerless to prevent. Considering her very limited opportunities, Miss Turnbull displayed a proficiency which astonished him. Even the sergeant was amazed, and suspected her of long practice.

"I wonder whether it is very hot outside?" she said at last, rising and looking out of the window.

"Only pleasantly warm," said the sergeant. "It would be nice down by the water."

"I'm afraid of disturbing father by our talk," said the considerate daughter. "You might tell him we've gone for a little stroll when he wakes," she added, turning to Blundell.

Mr. Blundell, who had risen with the idea of acting the humble but, in his opinion, highly necessary part of chaperon, sat down again and watched blankly from the window until they were out of sight. He was half inclined to think that the exigencies of the case warranted him in arousing the farmer at once.

It was an hour later when the farmer awoke, to find himself alone with Mr. Blundell, a state of affairs for which he strove with some pertinacity to make that aggrieved gentleman responsible.

"Why didn't you go with them?" he demanded.

"Because I wasn't asked," replied the other.

Mr. Turnbull sat up in his chair and eyed him disdainfully. "For a great, big chap like you are, John Blundell," he exclaimed, "it's surprising what a little pluck you've got."

"I don't want to go where I'm not wanted," retorted Mr. Blundell.

"That's where you make a mistake," said the other, regarding him severely; "girls like a masterful man, and, instead of getting your own way, you sit down quietly and do as you're told, like a tame—tame——"

"Tame what?" inquired Mr. Blundell, resentfully.

"I don't know," said the other, frankly; "the tamest thing you can think of. There's Daly laughing in his sleeve at you, and talking to Venia about Waterloo and the Crimea as though he'd been there. I thought it was pretty near settled between you."

"So did I," said Mr. Blundell.

"You're a big man, John," said the other, "but you're slow. You're all muscle and no head."

"I think of things afterwards," said Blundell, humbly; "generally after I get to bed."

Mr. Turnbull sniffed, and took a turn up and down the room; then he closed the door, and came towards his friend again.

"I dare say you're surprised at me being so anxious to get rid of Venia," he said, slowly, "but the fact is I'm thinking of marrying again myself."

"*You!*" said the startled Mr. Blundell.

"Yes, me," said the other, somewhat sharply. "But she won't marry so long as Venia is at home. It's a secret because if Venia got to hear of it she'd keep single to prevent it. She's just that sort of girl."

Mr. Blundell coughed, but did not deny it. "Who is it?" he inquired.

"Miss Sippet," was the reply. "She couldn't hold her own for half an hour against Venia."

Mr. Blundell, a great stickler for accuracy, reduced the time to five minutes.

"And now," said the aggrieved Mr. Turnbull, "now, so far as I can see, she's struck with Daly. If she has him it'll be years and years before they can marry. She seems crazy about heroes. She was talking to me the other night about them. Not to put too fine a point on it, she was talking about you."

Mr. Blundell blushed with pleased surprise.

"Said you were *not* a hero," explained Mr. Turnbull. "Of course, I stuck up for you. I said you'd got too much sense to go putting your life into danger. I said you were a very careful man, and I told her how particular you was about damp sheets. Your housekeeper told me."

"It's all nonsense," said Blundell, with a fiery face. "I'll send that old fool packing, if she can't keep her tongue quiet."

"It's very sensible of you, John," said Mr. Turnbull, "and a sensible girl would appreciate it. Instead of that, she only sniffed when I told her how careful you always were to wear flannel next to your skin. She said she liked dare-devils."

"I suppose she thinks Daly is a dare-devil," said the offended Mr. Blundell. "And I wish people wouldn't talk about me and my skin. Why can't they mind their own business?"

Mr. Turnbull eyed him indignantly, and then, sitting in a very upright position, slowly filled his pipe, and, declining a proffered match, rose and took one from the mantelpiece.

"I was doing the best I could for you," he said, staring hard at the ingrate. "I was trying to make Venia see what a careful husband you would make. Miss Sippet herself is most particular about such things—and Venia seemed to think something of it, because she asked me whether you used a warming-pan."

Mr. Blundell got up from his chair and, without going through the formality of bidding his host good-bye, quitted the room and closed the door violently behind him. He was red with rage, and he brooded darkly as he made his way home on the folly of carrying on the traditions of a devoted mother without thinking for himself.

¶

FOR the next two or three days, to Venia's secret concern, he failed to put in an appearance at the farm—a fact which made a flirtation with the sergeant a somewhat uninteresting business. Her sole recompense was the dismay of her father, and for his benefit she dwelt upon the advantages of the Army in a manner that would have made the fortune of a recruiting-sergeant.

"She's just crazy after the soldiers," he said to Mr. Blundell, whom he was trying to spur on to a desperate effort. "I've been watching her close, and I can see what

it is now ; she's romantic. You're too slow and ordinary for her. She wants somebody more dazzling. She told Daly only yesterday afternoon that she loved heroes. Told it to him to his face. I sat there and heard her. It's a pity you ain't a hero, John."

" Yes," said Mr. Blundell ; " then, if I was, I expect she'd like something else."

The other shook his head. " If you could only do something daring," he murmured ; " half-kill somebody, or save somebody's life, and let her see you do it. Couldn't you dive off the quay and save somebody's life from drowning ? "

" Yes, I could," said Blundell, " if somebody would only tumble in."

" You might pretend that you thought you saw somebody drowning," suggested Mr. Turnbull.

" And be laughed at," said Mr. Blundell, who knew his Venia by heart.

" You always seem to be able to think of objections," complained Mr. Turnbull ; " I've noticed that in you before."

" I'd go in fast enough if there was anybody there," said Blundell. " I'm not much of a swimmer, but——"

" All the better," interrupted the other ; " that would make it all the more daring."

" And I don't much care if I'm drowned," pursued the younger man, gloomily.

Mr. Turnbull thrust his hands in his pockets and took a turn or two up and down the room. His brows were knitted and his lips pursed. In the presence of this mental stress Mr. Blundell preserved a respectful silence.

" We'll all four go for a walk on the quay on Sunday afternoon," said Mr. Turnbull, at last.

" On the chance ? " inquired his staring friend.

" On the chance," assented the other ; " it's just possible Daly might fall in."

" He might if we walked up and down five million times," said Blundell, unpleasantly.

" He might if we walked up and down three or four times," said Mr. Turnbull, " especially if you happened to stumble."

" I never stumble," said the matter-of-fact Mr. Blundell. " I don't know anybody more sure-footed than I am."

" Or thick-headed," added the exasperated Mr. Turnbull.

Mr. Blundell regarded him patiently ; he had a strong suspicion that his friend had been drinking.

" Stumbling," said Mr. Turnbull, conquering his annoyance with an effort— " stumbling is a thing that might happen to anybody. You trip your foot against a stone and lurch up against Daly ; he tumbles overboard, and you off with your jacket and dive off the quay after him. He can't swim a stroke."

Mr. Blundell caught his breath and gazed at him in speechless amaze.

" There's sure to be several people on the quay if it's a fine afternoon," continued his instructor. " You'll have half Dunchurch round you, praising you and patting you on the back—all in front of Venia, mind you. It'll be put in all the papers and you'll get a medal."

" And suppose we are both drowned ? " said Mr. Blundell, soberly.

" Drowned ? Fiddlesticks ! " said Mr. Turnbull. " However, please yourself. If you're afraid——"

" I'll do it," said Blundell, decidedly.

" And mind," said the other, " don't do it as if it's as easy as kissing your fingers ; be half-drowned yourself, or at least pretend to be. And when you're on the quay take your time about coming round. Be longer than Daly is : you don't want him to get all the pity."

" All right," said the other.

" After a time you can open your eyes," went on his instructor ; " then, if I were you, I should say, ' Good-bye, Venia,' and close 'em again. Work it up affecting, and send messages to your aunts."

" It sounds all right," said Blundell.

" It *is* all right," said Mr. Turnbull. " That's just the bare idea I've given you. It's for you to improve upon it. You've got two days to think about it."

Mr. Blundell thanked him, and for the next two days he thought of little else. Being a careful man he made his will, and it was in a comparatively cheerful frame of mind that he made his way on Sunday afternoon to Mr. Turnbull's.

The sergeant was already there conversing in low tones with Venia by the window, while Mr. Turnbull, sitting opposite in an oaken armchair, regarded him with an expression which would have shocked Iago.

" We were just thinking of having a blow down by the water," he said, as Blundell entered.

" What ! a hot day like this ? " said Venia.

" I was just thinking how beautifully cool it is in here," said the sergeant, who

was hoping for a repetition of the previous Sunday's performance.

"It's cooler outside," said Mr. Turnbull, with a wilful ignoring of facts; "much cooler when you get used to it."

He led the way with Blundell, and Venia and the sergeant, keeping as much as possibe in the shade of the dust-powdered hedges, followed. The sun was blazing in the sky, and scarce half-a-dozen people were to be seen on the little curved quay which constituted the usual Sunday afternoon promenade. The water, a dozen feet below, lapped cool and green against the stone sides.

At the extreme end of the quay, underneath the lantern, they all stopped, ostensibly to admire a full-rigged ship sailing slowly by in the distance, but really to effect the change of partners necessary to the afternoon's business. The change gave Mr. Turnbull some trouble ere it was effected, but he was successful at last, and, walking behind the two young men, waited somewhat nervously for developments.

¶

TWICE they paraded the length of the quay, and nothing happened. The ship was still visible, and the sergeant halting to gaze at it, the company lost their formation, and he led the complaisant Venia off from beneath her father's very nose.

"You're a pretty manager, you are, John Blundell," said the incensed Mr. Turnbull.

"I know what I'm about," said Blundell, slowly.

"Well, why don't you do it?" demanded the other. "I suppose you are going to wait until there are more people about, and then perhaps some of them will see you push him over."

"It isn't that," said Blundell, slowly, "but you told me to improve on your plan, you know, and I've been thinking out improvements."

"Well?" said the other.

"It doesn't seem much good saving Daly," said Blundell; "that's what I've been thinking. He would be in as much danger as I should, and he'd get as much sympathy; perhaps more."

"Do you mean to tell me that you are backing out of it?" demanded Mr. Turnbull.

"No," said Blundell, slowly, "but it would be much better if I saved somebody else. I don't want Daly to be pitied."

"Bah! you *are* backing out of it," said the irritated Mr. Turnbull. "You're afraid of a little cold water."

"No, I'm not," said Blundell; "but it would be better in every way to save somebody else. She'll see Daly standing there doing nothing while I am struggling for my life. I've thought it all out very carefully. I know I'm not quick, but I'm sure, and when I make up my mind to do a thing, I do it. You ought to know that."

"That's all very well," said the other; "but who else is there to push in?"

"That's all right," said Blundell, vaguely. "Don't you worry about that; I shall find somebody."

Mr. Turnbull turned and cast a speculative eye along the quay. As a rule, he had great confidence in Blundell's determination, but on this occasion he had his doubts.

"Well, it's a riddle to me," he said, slowly. "I give it up. It seems—— *Halloa!* Good heavens, be careful! You nearly had *me* in then."

"Did I?" said Blundell, thickly. "I'm very sorry."

Mr. Turnbull, angry at such carelessness, accepted the apology in a grudging spirit and trudged along in silence. Then he started nervously as a monstrous and unworthy suspicion occurred to him. It was an incredible thing to suppose, but at the same time he felt that there was nothing like being on the safe side, and in tones not quite free from significance he intimated his desire of changing places with his awkward friend.

"It's all right," said Blundell, soothingly.

"I know it is," said Mr. Turnbull, regarding him fixedly; "but I prefer this side. You very near had me over just now."

"I staggered," said Mr. Blundell.

"Another inch and I should have been overboard," said Mr. Turnbull, with a shudder. "That would have been a nice how d'ye do."

Mr. Blundell coughed and looked seawards. "Accidents will happen," he murmured.

They reached the end of the quay again and stood talking, and when they turned once more the sergeant was surprised and gratified at the ease with which he bore off Venia. Mr. Turnbull and Blundell followed some little way behind, and the former gentleman's suspicions were somewhat lulled by finding that his friend

made no attempt to take the inside place. He looked about him with interest for a likely victim, but in vain.

"What are you looking at?" he demanded, impatiently, as Blundell suddenly came to a stop and gazed curiously into the harbour.

"Jelly-fish," said the other, briefly. "I never saw such a monster. It must be a yard across."

Mr. Turnbull stopped, but could see nothing, and even when Blundell pointed it out with his finger he had no better success. He stepped forward a pace, and his suspicions returned with renewed vigour as a hand was laid caressingly on his shoulder. The next moment, with a wild shriek, he shot suddenly over the edge and disappeared. Venia and the sergeant, turning hastily, were just in time to see the fountain which ensued on his immersion.

"Oh, save him!" cried Venia.

The sergeant ran to the edge and gazed in helpless dismay as Mr. Turnbull came to the surface and disappeared again. At the same moment Blundell, who had thrown off his coat, dived into the harbour, and, rising rapidly to the surface, caught the fast choking Mr. Turnbull by the collar.

"Keep still," he cried, sharply, as the farmer tried to clutch him; "keep still or I'll let you go."

"Help!" choked the farmer, gazing up at the little knot of people which had collected on the quay.

A stout fisherman who had not run for thirty years came along the edge of the quay at a shambling trot, with a coil of rope over his arm. John Blundell saw him and, mindful of the farmer's warning about kissing of fingers, etc., raised his disengaged arm and took that frenzied gentleman below the surface again. By the time they came up he was very glad for his own sake to catch the line skilfully thrown by the old fisherman and be drawn gently to the side.

"I'll tow you to the steps," said the fisherman; "don't let go o' the line."

Mr. Turnbull saw to that; he wound the rope round his wrist and began to regain his presence of mind as they were drawn steadily towards the steps. Willing hands drew them out of the water and helped them up on to the quay, where Mr. Turnbull, sitting in his own puddle, coughed up salt water and glared ferociously at the inanimate form of Mr. Blundell. Sergeant Daly and another man were rendering what they piously believed to be first aid to the apparently drowned, while the stout fisherman, with both hands to his mouth, was yelling in heartrending accents for a barrel.

"He—he—push—pushed me in," gasped the choking Mr. Turnbull.

Nobody paid any attention to him; even Venia, seeing that he was safe, was on her knees by the side of the unconscious Blundell.

"He—he's shamming," bawled the neglected Mr. Turnbull.

"Shame!" said somebody, without even looking round.

"He pushed me in," repeated Mr. Turnbull. "He pushed me in."

"Oh, father," said Venia, with a scandalised glance at him, "how can you?"

"Shame!" said the bystanders, briefly, as they watched anxiously for signs of returning life on the part of Mr. Blundell. He lay still with his eyes closed, but his hearing was still acute, and the sounds of a rapidly-approaching barrel trundled by a breathless Samaritan did him more good than anything.

"Good-bye, Venia," he said, in a faint voice; "good-bye."

Miss Turnbull sobbed and took his hand.

"He's shamming," roared Mr. Turnbull, incensed beyond measure at the faithful manner in which Blundell was carrying out his instructions. "He pushed me in."

There was an angry murmur from the bystanders.

"Be reasonable, Mr. Turnbull," said the sergeant, somewhat sharply.

"He nearly lost 'is life over you," said the stout fisherman. "As plucky a thing as ever I see. If I 'adn't ha' been 'andy with that there line you'd both ha' been drownded."

"Give—my love—to everybody," said Blundell, faintly. "Good-bye, Venia. Good-bye, Mr. Turnbull."

"Where's that barrel?" demanded the stout fisherman, crisply. "Going to be all night with it? Now, two of you——"

Mr. Blundell, with a great effort, and assisted by Venia and the sergeant, sat up. He felt that he had made a good impression, and had no desire to spoil it by riding the barrel. With one exception, everybody was regarding him with moist-eyed admiration. The exception's eyes were, perhaps, the moistest of them all, but admiration had no place in them.

"You're all being made fools of," he said, getting up and stamping. "I tell you he pushed me overboard for the purpose."

"Oh, father! how can you?" demanded Venia, angrily. "He saved your life."

"He pushed me in," repeated the farmer. "Told me to look at a jelly-fish and pushed me in."

"What for?" inquired Sergeant Daly.

"Because—" said Mr. Turnbull. He looked at the unconscious sergeant, and the words on his lips died away in an inarticulate growl.

"What for?" pursued the sergeant, in triumph. "Be reasonable, Mr. Turnbull. Where's the reason in pushing you overboard and then nearly losing his life saving you? That would be a fool's trick. It was as fine a thing as ever I saw."

"What you 'ad, Mr. Turnbull," said the stout fisherman, tapping him on the arm, "was a little touch o' the sun."

"What felt to you like a push," said another man, "and over you went."

"As easy as easy," said a third.

"You're red in the face now," said the stout fisherman, regarding him critically, "and your eyes are starting. You take my advice and get 'ome and get to bed, and the first thing you'll do when you get your senses back will be to go round and thank Mr. Blundell for all 'e's done for you."

Mr. Turnbull looked at them, and the circle of intelligent faces grew misty before his angry eyes. One man, ignoring his sodden condition, recommended a wet handkerchief tied round his brow.

"I don't want any thanks, Mr. Turnbull," said Blundell, feebly, as he was assisted to his feet. "I'd do as much for you again."

The stout fisherman patted him admiringly on the back, and Mr. Turnbull felt like a prophet beholding a realised vision as the spectators clustered round Mr. Blundell and followed their friend's example. Tenderly but firmly they led the hero in triumph up the quay towards home, shouting out eulogistic descriptions of his valour to curious neighbours as they passed. Mr. Turnbull, churlishly keeping his distance in the rear of the procession, received in grim silence the congratulations of his friends.

The extraordinary hallucinations caused by the sunstroke lasted with him for over a week, but at the end of that time his mind cleared and he saw things in the same light as reasonable folk. Venia was the first to congratulate him upon his recovery; but his extraordinary behaviour in proposing to Miss Sippet the very day on which she herself became Mrs. Blundell convinced her that his recovery was only partial.

Laughter and Tears

LAUGHTER is one of the very privileges of reason, being confined to the human species. LEIGH HUNT.

TEARS are often to be found where there is little sorrow, and the deepest sorrow without tears. JOHNSON.

LAUGH at all twaddle about fate. A man's fate is what he makes it, nothing else. ANON.

A LADY'S tears are silent orators. BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

LAUGHTER and tears are meant to turn the wheels of the same machinery of sensibility; one is wind-power, and the other water-power, that is all. HOLMES.

NOTHING dries quicker than a tear. CICERO.

IN my mind there is nothing so illiberal and so ill-bred as audible laughter . . . not to mention the disagreeable noise it makes, and the shocking distortion of the face that it occasions. LORD CHESTERFIELD.

IT is only to the happy that tears are a luxury. MOORE.

Dimoussi and the Pistol

Fanaticism is a fire which heats the mind

By A. E. W. MASON

IN the maps of Morocco you will see, stretching southwards of the city of Mequinez, a great tract of uncharted country. It is lawless and forbidden land. Even the Sultan Mulai el Hassen, that great fighter, omitted it from his expeditions.

But certain tribes are known to inhabit it, such as the Beni M'tir, and certain villages can be assigned a locality, such as Agurai, which lies one long day's journey from the Renegade's Gate of Mequinez.

At Agurai Dimoussi was born, and lived for the first fifteen years of his life—Dimoussi the Englishman, as he was called, though in features and colour he had the look of an Arab with just a strain of negro blood.

At the age of fifteen a desire to see the world laid hold upon Dimoussi. As far as the eye could see from any mound about the village, there stretched on every side a rolling plain, silent and empty. Hardly a bird sang in the air above it; and everywhere it was dark with bushes wherein the flowers of asphodel gleamed pale and small.

Dimoussi wearied of the plain. One thin, reddish line meandered uncertainly from north to south, a stone's throw from the village, where the feet of men and mules passing at rare intervals through many centuries had beaten down a path. Along this path Dimoussi allowed his fancies to carry him into a world of enchantment; and one spring morning his feet carried him along it, too.

For half-a-dozen men of the Beni M'tir carrying almonds and walnuts into Mequinez happened to pass Agurai at a moment when Dimoussi was watching, and his mother was at work on a patch of tilled ground out of sight. Dimoussi had no other parent than his mother.

He ran into the hut with its tent roof of sacking and its sides of rough hurdles, which was his home, searched in a corner for a big, brass-barrelled pistol which had long been the pride of the establishment, and, hiding it under his ragged jellaba, he ran down the track and joined himself on to the tiny caravan. The next morning he came to Mequinez, where he parted company with the tribesmen.

Dimoussi had not so much as a copper flouss upon him, but on the other hand he had a pistol and the whole world in front of him. And what reasonable boy could want more? All that day he wandered about the streets, gaping at the houses, at the towers of the mosques, and at the stalls in the markets, but as the afternoon declined hunger got hold of him. His friends of yesterday had vanished. Somehow he must get food.

He fingered the pistol under his jellaba irresolutely. He walked along a street which he came to know afterwards as the Sôk Kubba. In the middle was built a square tent of stone with an open arch at each side and a pointed roof of fluted tiles trailed over by a vine. Just beyond this stone tent the street narrowed, and on the left-hand side a man who sold weapons squatted upon the floor of a dark booth.

"How much?" asked Dimoussi, producing his pistol, but loth to let it go.

The shopman looked at Dimoussi, and looked at the pistol. Then he tossed it carelessly behind him into the litter of his booth.

"It is no good. As sure as my name is Mustapha, it would not kill a rabbit. But see! My heart is kind. I will give you three dollars."

He counted them out. Dimoussi stolidly shook his head. "Seven," said he.

Mustapha reached behind him for the pistol, and flung it down at Dimoussi's feet.

"Take it away," said he. "I will not haggle with foolish boys who have stolen a thing of no value, and wish to sell it at a great price. Take it away! Yet, out of my charity, I will give you four dollars."

" Five," said Dimoussi.

And five he received.

He bought rice and eggs in the market, and turned under an old archway of green tiles into the Fondak Henna. There he cooked his food at a fire, ate, and proposed to sleep.

But Fate had laid her hand upon Dimoussi. He slept not at all that night. He sat with his back propped against the filigree plaster of one of the pillars, and listened to a Moor of the Sherarda tribe, who smoked keef and talked until the morning.

" Yes," said the Sherarda man, " I have travelled far and wide. Now I go home to my own village of Segota, on Jebel Zarhon."

" Have you been to Fez ? " asked Dimoussi eagerly.

" I have lived in Fez. I served in the army of my lord the Sultan until I was bored with it. It is a fine town, and a large one. The river flows in a hundred streams underneath the houses. In every house there is running water. But it is nothing to the town of Mulai Idris."

Dimoussi clasped his hands about his knees.

" Oh, tell me ! Tell me ! " he cried so loudly that in the shadows of the Fondak men stirred upon their straw and cursed him.

" I have also travelled to Rabat, a great town upon the sea, whither many consools come in fireships. A great town, draped with flowers and cactus. But it is nothing to Mulai Idris. There are no consools in Mulai Idris."

All through his talk the name of Mulai Idris, the sacred city on the slope of Jebel Zarhon, came and went like a shuttle of a loom.

The Sherarda Moor thought highly of life in Mulai Idris, since it was possible to live there without work.

Pilgrims came to visit the shrine of the founder of the Moorish Empire, with offerings in their hands ; and the whole township lived, and lived well, upon those offerings. Moreover, there were no Europeans, or " consools," as he termed them.

The Moor spoke at length, and with hatred, of the Europeans—pale, ungainly creatures in ridiculous clothes, given over to the devil, people with a clever knack of invention, no doubt, in the matter of fire-arms and cameras and spy-glasses, but, man for man, no match for any Moor.

" Only three cities are safe from them now in all Morocco : Sheshawan in the north, Tafilat in the south, and Mulai Idris. But Mulai Idris is safest. Once a party of them—Englishmen—came riding up the steep road to the gate even there, but from the walls we stoned them back. God's curse on them ! Let them stay at home ! But they must always be pushing somewhere."

Dimoussi, recognising in himself a point of kinship with the " consools," said gravely :

" I am an Englishman."

The Sherarda man laughed, as though he had heard an excellent joke, and continued to discourse upon the splendours of Mulai Idris until the sleepers waked in their corners, and the keeper flung open the door, and the grey daylight crept into the Fondak.

" Oh, tell me ! " said Dimoussi. " The city is far from here ? "

" Set out now. You will be in Mulai Idris before sunset."

Dimoussi rose to his feet.

" I will go to Mulai Idris," said he, and he went out into the cool, clear air. The Sherarda Moor accompanied Dimoussi to the Bardain Gate, and there they parted company, the boy going northwards, the Moor following the eastward track towards Fez. He had done his work, though what he had done he did not know.

At noon Dimoussi came out upon a high tableland, as empty as the plains which stretched about his native Agurai. Far away upon his left the dark, serrated ridge of Jebel Gerouan stood out against the sky. Nearer to him upon his right rose the high rock of Jebel Zarhon. In some fold of that mountain lay this fabulous city of Mulai Idris.

Dimoussi walked forward, a tiny figure in that vast solitude. There were no villages, there were no trees anywhere. The plateau extended ahead of him like a softly heaving sea, as far as the eyes could reach. It was covered with bushes in flower ; and here and there an acre of marigolds or a field of blue lupin decked it out, as though someone had chosen to make a garden there.

Then suddenly, upon Dimoussi's right, the hillside opened, and in the recess he saw Mulai Idris, a city high-placed and dazzlingly white, which tumbled down the hillside like a cascade divided at its apex by a great white mosque.

The mosque was the tomb of Mulai Idris, the founder of the empire. Dimoussi dropped upon his knees, and bowed his forehead to the ground. "Mulai Idris," he whispered, in a voice of exaltation. Yesterday he had never even heard the name of the town. To-day the mere sight of it lifted him into a passion of fervour.

Those white walls masked a crowded city of filth and noisome smells. But Dimoussi walked on air; and his desire to see more of the world died away altogether.

He was in the most sacred place in all Morocco; and there he stayed. There was no need for him to work. He had the livelong day wherein to store away in his heart the sayings of his elders. And amongst those sayings there was not one which he heard more frequently than this:

"There are too many Europeans in Morocco."

Fanaticism was in the very stones of the town. Dimoussi saw it shining sombrely in the eyes of the men who paced and rode about the streets; he felt it behind the impassivity of their faces. It came to him as an echo of their constant prayers. Dimoussi began to understand it.

Once or twice he saw the Europeans during that spring. For close by in the plain a great stone arch and some broken pillars showed where the Roman city of Volubilis had stood. And by those ruins once or twice a party of Europeans encamped.

Dimoussi visited each encampment, begged money of the "consools," and watched with curiosity the queer mechanical things they carried with them — their cameras, their weapons, their folding-mirrors, their brushes and combs. But on each visit he became more certain that there were too many Europeans in Morocco.

"A djehad is needed," said one of the old men sitting outside the gate—"a holy war—to exterminate them."

"But it is not easy to start a djehad," replied Dimoussi.

The elders stroked their beards and laughed superciliously.

"You are young and foolish, Dimoussi. A single shot from a gun, and all Moghrebbin is in flame."

"Yes; and he that fired the shot certain of Paradise."

Not one of them had a thought to fire the shot. They were chatterers of vain words. But the words sank into Dimoussi's mind; for Dimoussi was different. He began to think, as he put it; as a matter of fact, he began to feel.

He went up to the tomb of Mulai Idris, bribed the guardian, who sat with a wand in the court outside the shrine, to let him pass, and for the first time in his life stood within the sacred place. The shrine was dark, and the ticking of the clocks in the gloom filled Dimoussi's soul with awe and wonderment.

For the shrine was crowded with clocks: grandfather clocks with white faces, and gold faces, and enamelled faces, stood side by side along the walls, marking every kind of hour. Eight-day clocks stood upon pedestals and niches; the whole room whirred, and ticked, and chimed; never had Dimoussi dreamed of anything so marvellous. There were glass balls, too, dangling from the roof on silver strings, and red baize hangings for the tomb.

Dimoussi bowed his head and prayed for the djehad. And as he prayed in that dark and solitary place there came to him an inspiration. It seemed that Mulai Idris himself laid his hand upon the boy's head. It needed only one man, only one shot, to start the djehad. He raised his head, and all the ticking clocks cried out to him: "Thou art the man." Dimoussi left the shrine with his head high in the air and a proudness in his gait. For he had his mission.

Thereafter he lay in wait upon the track over the plain to Mequinez, watching the north and the south for the coming of a traveller.

¶

DURING the third week of his watching he saw advancing along the track mules carrying the baggage of Europeans. Dimoussi crouched in the bushes, and let them pass with the muleteers. A good way behind them two Europeans rode slowly upon horses. As they came opposite to Dimoussi, one, a dark, thin man, stretched out his arm, and, turning to his companion said:

"Challoner, there's Mulai Idris."

At once Dimoussi sprang to his feet. He did not mean to be robbed of his great privilege. He shook his head.

"Lar, lar!" he cried. "Bad men in Mulai Idris. They will stone you. You go to Mequinez."

The man who had already spoken laughed.

"We are not going to Mulai Idris," he replied. He was a man named Arden, who had spent the greater part of many years in Morocco, going up and down that country in the guise of a Moor, and so counterfeiting accent, and tongue, and manners that he had even prayed in their mosques and escaped detection.

"You are English?" asked Dimoussi.

"Yes. Come on, Challoner!"

And then, to his astonishment, as his horse stepped on, Dimoussi cried out, actually in English:

"One, two, three, and away!"

Arden stopped his horse.

"Where did you learn that?" he asked; and he asked in English.

But Dimoussi had spoken the only five words of English that he knew, and even those he did not understand.

Arden repeated the question in Arabic; and Dimoussi answered with a smile:

"I, too, am English."

"Oh! are you?" said Arden, with a laugh; and he rode on. "These Moors love a joke. He learned the words over there, no doubt, from the tourists at Volubilis. Do you see those blocks of stone along the track?"

"Yes," answered Challoner. "How do they come there?"

"Old Mulai Ismail, the sultan, built the great palace at Mequinez, two hundred years ago from the ruins of Volubilis. These stones were dragged down by the captives of the Salee pirates——"

"And by the English prisoners from Tangier," said Challoner suddenly.

"Yes," replied Arden, with some surprise, for there was a certain excitement in his companion's voice and manner. "The English were prisoners until the siege ended, and we gave up Tangier and they were released. When Mulai Ismail died, all these men dragging stones just dropped them and left them where they lay by the track. There they have remained ever since. It's strange, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Challoner thoughtfully. He was a young man with the look of a student rather than a traveller. He rode slowly on, looking about him, as though at each turn of the road he expected to see some Englishman in a tattered uniform of the Tangier Foot, leaning upon a block of masonry and wiping the sweat from his brow.

"Two of my ancestors were prisoners here in Mequinez," he said. "They were captured together at the fall of the Henrietta Fort in 1680, and brought up here to work on Mulai Ismail's palace. It's strange to think that they dragged these stones down this very track. I don't suppose that the country has changed at all. They must have come up from the coast by the same road we followed, passed the same villages, and heard the pariah dogs bark at night just as we have done."

Arden glanced in surprise at his companion.

"I did not know that. I suppose that is the reason why you wish to visit Mequinez?"

Challoner's sudden desire to travel inland to this town had been a mystery to Arden. He knew Challoner well, and knew him for a dilettante, an amiable amateur of the arts, a man always upon the threshold of a new interest, but never by any chance on the other side of the door, and, above all, a stay-at-home. Now the reason was explained.

"Yes," Challoner admitted. "I was anxious to see Mequinez."

"Both men came home when peace was declared, I suppose?" said Arden.

"No. Only one came home, James Challoner. The other, Luke, turned renegade to escape the sufferings of slavery, and was never allowed to come back. The two men were brothers.

"I discovered the story by chance. I was looking over the papers in the library one morning, in order to classify them, and I came across a manuscript play written by a Challoner after the Restoration. Between the leaves of the play an old, faded letter was lying. It had been written by James, on his return, to Luke's wife, telling her she would never see Luke again. I will show you the letter this evening."

"That's a strange story," said Arden. "Was nothing heard of Luke afterwards?"

"Nothing. No doubt he lived and died in Mequinez."

Challoner looked back as he spoke. Dimoussi was still standing amongst the bushes, watching the travellers recede from him. His plan was completely formed. There would be a djehad to-morrow, and the honour of it would belong to Dimoussi of Agurai.

He felt in the leathern wallet which swung at his side upon a silk orange-coloured cord. He had ten dollars in that wallet. He walked in the rear of the

travellers to Mequinez, and reached the town just before sunset. He went at once to the great square by the Renegade's Gate, where the horses are brought to roll in the dust on their way to the watering-fountain.

There were many there at the moment; and the square was thick with dust, like a mist.

But, through the mist, in a corner, Dimoussi saw the tents of the travellers, and, in front of the tents, from wall to wall, a guard of armed soldiers sitting upon the ground in a semi-circle.

Dimoussi was in no hurry. He loitered there until darkness followed upon the sunset, and the stars came out.

He saw lights burning in the tents, and, through the open doorway of one, the man who had spoken to him, Arden, stretched upon a lounge-chair, reading a paper which he held in his hand.

Dimoussi went once more to the Fondak Henna, and made up for the wakeful night he had passed here with a Moor of the Sherarda tribe by sleeping until morning with a particular soundness.

¶

THE paper which Arden was reading was the faded letter written at "Berry Street, St. James's," on April, 14th 1684, by the James Challoner who had returned, to the wife of the Luke Challoner who had turned renegade.

Arden took a literal copy of that letter; and it is printed here from that copy:

"Berry Street, St. James's,
"April 14th, 1684.

"My dear Pamela:

"I have just now come back from Whitehall, where I was most graciously received by his Majestie, who asked many questions about our sufferings among the Moors, and promised rewards with so fine a courtesy and condescension that my four years of slavery were all forgotten. Indeed, my joy would have been rare, but I knew the time would come when I must go back to my lodging and write to you news which will go near to break your heart. Why did not my brother stay quietly at home with his wife, at whose deare side his place was? But he must suddenlie leave his house, and come out to his younger brother at Tangier, who was never more sorry to see any man than I was to see Luke. For we were hard pressed: the Moors had pushed their trenches close under our walls, and any night the city might fall. And now I am come safely home, though there is no deare heart to break for me, and Luke must for ever stay behind. For that is the bitter truth. We shall see Luke more of Luke, and you, my deare, are widowed, and yet no widow. Oh, why did you let him goe, knowing how quick he is to take fire, and how quick to cool? I, too, am to blame, for I kept him by me out of my love for him, and that was his undoing.

"In May, ——, I commanded the Henrietta Fort, and Luke was a volunteer with me. For five days we were attacked night and day, we were cut off from the town, there was no hope that way, and all our ammunition and water consumed, and most of us wounded or killed. So, late at night on the 13th, we were compelled to surrender upon promise of our lives. Luke and I were carried up to Mequinez, and there set to build a wall, which was to stretch from that town to Morocco city, so that a blind man might travel all those many miles safely without a guide. I will admit that our sufferings were beyond endurance. We slept underground in close, earth dungeons, down to which we must crawl on our hands and knees; and at day we laboured in the sunlight, starved and thirsting, no man knowing when the whip of the task-master would fall across his back, and yet sure that it would fall. Luke was not to be blamed—to be pitied, rather. He was of a finer, more delicate, nature. What was pain to us was anguish and torture to him. One night I crept down into my earth alone, and the next day he walked about Mequinez with the robes of a Moor. He had turned renegade.

"I was told that the Bashaw had taken him into his service, but I never had the opportunity of speech with him again, although I once heard his voice. That was six months afterwards, when peace had been re-established between his Magtie and the Emperor. Part of the terms of the peace was that the English captives should be released and sent down to the coast, but the renegades must stay behind. I pleaded with the Bashaw that Luke might be set free, too, but could by no means persuade him.

We departed from Mequinez one early morning, and on the city wall stood the Bashaw's house; and as I came opposite to it I saw a hand wave farewell from a narrow window-slit, and heard Luke's voice cry: 'Farewell!' bravely, Pamela, bravely!

"JAMES CHALLONER."

When Arden had finished this letter he walked out of the tent, passed through the semi-circle of sentinels, and stood in front of the Renegade's Gate. There Challoner joined him, and both men looked at that great arch for a while without speaking. It rose black against a violet and starlit sky. The pattern of its coloured tiles could not be distinguished; but even in the darkness something of its exquisite delicacy could be perceived.

"Luke Challoner very likely worked upon that arch," said Arden. "Yet, as I read that letter, it seemed so very human, very near, as though it had been written yesterday."

"I wonder what became of him?" said Challoner. "From some house on the city wall he waved his hand to his brother, and cried: 'Farewell,' bravely. I wonder what became of him."

"I will take a photograph of that gate to-morrow," said Arden.

¶

THE next morning Dimoussi came out of the Fondak Henna and walked to the little booth in the Sôk Kubba. Mustapha was squatting upon the floor, and with a throbbing heart, Dimoussi noticed the familiar pistol shining against the dark wall behind. It had not been sold.

"Give it to me," he said.

Mustapha took the pistol from the nail on which it hung.

"It is worth fourteen dollars," said he. "But, see, to every man his chance comes. I am in a good mind to-day. My health is excellent and my heart light. You shall have it for twelve."

Dimoussi took the pistol in his hand. It had a flint lock and was mounted in polished brass, and a cover of brass was on the heel of the butt.

"It is not worth twelve. I will give you seven for it."

Mustapha raised his hands in a gesture of indignation.

"Seven dollars!" he cried, in a shrill, angry voice. "Hear him! Seven dollars! Look, it comes from Agadhir in the Sus country, where they make the best weapons."

He pointed out to Dimoussi certain letters upon the plate underneath the lock. "There it is written."

Dimoussi could not read, but he nodded his head sagely.

"Yes, it is worth seven," said he.

The shopman snatched it away from the boy.

"I will not be angry, for it is natural to boys to be foolish. But I will tell you the truth. I gave eleven dollars for it after much bargaining. But it has hung in my shop for a year, and no one any more has money. Therefore, I will sell it to you for ten."

He felt behind his back and showed Dimoussi a tantalising glint of the brass barrel. Dimoussi was unshaken.

"It has hung in your shop for four months," said he.

"A year. That is why I will sell it to you at the loss of a dollar."

"Liar, and son of a liar," replied the boy, without any heat, "and grandson of a liar. I sold it to you for five dollars, four months ago. I will give you eight for it to-day."

He counted out the eight dollars one by one upon the raised floor of the booth, and the shopman could not resist.

"Very well," he cried furiously. "Take it, and may your children starve as mine surely will."

"You are a pig and the son of a pig," replied Dimoussi calmly. "Have you any powder?"

He changed his ninth dollar and bought some powder.

"You will need bullets, too," said Mustapha. "I will sell you them very cheap. Oh, you are lucky. Do you see those signs upon the barrel? The pistol is charmed and cannot miss."

Dimoussi looked at the signs engraved one above the other on the barrel. There was a crown, and a strange letter and a lion. He had long wondered what those signs meant. He was very glad now that he understood.

"But I will not buy lead bullets," said Dimoussi wisely. "The pistol may be enchanted so that it cannot miss, but there are also enchantments against lead bullets so that they cannot hurt."

So Dimoussi walked away, and begged a lump of rock salt from another booth

instead. He cut down the lump until it fitted roughly into the hexagonal barrel of his pistol. Then he loaded the pistol, and, hiding the weapon in the wide sleeve of his jellaba, sauntered to the great square before the Renegade's Gate. There were groups of people standing about watching the tents, and the inevitable ring of sentries. But while Dimoussi was still loitering—he would have loitered for a fortnight if need be, for there were no limits to Dimoussi's patience—Arden came out of his tent with his camera, and Challoner followed with a tripod stand.

The two consools passed the line of guards and set up the camera in front of the Renegade's Gate. Dimoussi was quite impartial as to which of the two should be sacrificed to begin the djehad, but again an ironical fate laid its hand upon him. It was Arden who was to work the camera. It was Arden, therefore, who was surrounded by the idlers, and was safe. Challoner, on the other hand, had to stand quite apart, so as to screen the lens from the direct rays of the sun.

"A little more to the right, Challoner," said Arden. "That'll do!"

He put his head under the focussing-cloth, and the next instant he heard a loud report, followed by shouts and screams and the rush of feet; and when he tore the focussing-cloth away he saw Challoner lying upon the ground, the sentries agitatedly rushing this way and that, and the bystanders to a man in full flight.

Dimoussi had chosen his opportunity well. He stood between two men, and rather behind them, and exactly opposite to Challoner. All eyes were fixed upon the camera, even Challoner's. It was true that he did see the sun glitter suddenly upon something bright, that he did turn, that he realised the bright thing was the brass barrel of a big flintlock pistol. But before he could move or shout the pistol was fired, and a heavy blow like a blow from a cudgel struck him full on the chest.

Challoner spoke no more than a few words afterwards. The lump of rock salt had done the work of an explosive bullet. He was just able to answer a question of Arden's:

"Did you see who fired?"

"The boy who came from Mulai Idris," whispered Challoner. "He shot me with a brass-barrelled pistol." That seemed to have made a most vivid impression upon his mind, for more than once he repeated it.

But Dimoussi was by this time out of the Renegade's Gate, and running with all his might through the olive-groves towards the open, lawless country south of Mequinez. By the evening he was safe from capture, and lifted up with pride.

Certainly no djehad followed upon the murder, and that was disappointing. But it was not Dimoussi's fault. He had done his best according to his lights. Meanwhile, it seemed prudent to him to settle down quietly at Ajurai. He was nearly sixteen now. Dimoussi thought that he would settle down and marry.

Here the episode would have ended but for two circumstances. In the first place, Dimoussi carried back with him from Mequinez the brass-barrelled pistol; and in the second place Arden, two years later, acted upon a long-cherished desire to penetrate the unmapped country south of Mequinez.

He travelled with a mule as a Jew pedlar, knowing that such a man, for the sake of his wares, may go where a Moor may not. Of his troubles during his six months' wanderings now is not the time to speak. It is enough that at the end of the six months he set up his little canvas shelter one evening by the village of Agurai.

The men came at once and squatted chattering, about his shelter.

"Is there a woman in the village," asked Arden, "who will wash some clothes for me?"

"And the sheikh of the village rose up and replied:

"Yes; the Frenchwoman. I will send her to you."

Arden was perplexed. It seemed extraordinary that in a little village in a remote and unusually lawless district of Morocco there should be a French blanchisseuse. But he made no comment, and spread out his wares upon the ground. In a few moments a woman appeared. She had the Arab face, the Arab colour. But she stood unconcernedly before Arden, and said in Arabic:

"I am the Frenchwoman. Give me the clothes you want washing."

Arden reached behind him for the bundle. He addressed her in French, but she shook her head, and carried the bundle away. Her place was taken by another, a very old, dark woman, who was accompanied by a youth, carrying a closed basket.

" Pigeons," said the old woman. " Good, fat, live pigeons."

Arden was fairly tired of that national food by this time, and waved her away.

" Very well," said she. She took the basket from the youth, placed it on the ground, and opened the lid. Then she clapped her hands, and the pigeons flew out. As they rose into the air she laughed, and cried out in English—yes, actually in English—" One, two, three, and away ! "

Arden was fairly startled.

" What words are those ? " he exclaimed.

" English," the old woman replied in Arabic. " I am the Englishwoman."

And the men of the village who were clustered round the shelter agreed, as though nothing could be more natural :

" Yes ; she is the Englishwoman."

"And what do the words mean ? "

The old woman shrugged her shoulders.

" My father used them just as I did," she said. She spoke with a certain pride in the possession of those five uncomprehended words. " He learned them from his father. I do not know what they mean."

It was mystifying enough to Arden that, in a country where hardly a Moor of a foreign tribe, and certainly no Europeans, had ever been known to penetrate, there should be a Frenchwoman who knew no French, and an Englishwoman with five words of English which she did not understand.

But there was more than this to startle Arden. He had heard those same words spoken once before, by a Moorish boy who also declared himself an Englishman ; and that Moorish boy had murdered his friend Challoner.

Arden glanced carelessly at the youth who stood by the old woman's side.

" That is your son ? " said he.

" Yes. This is Dimoussi."

Dimoussi's cheeks wore the shadow of a coming beard. He had grown.

Arden could not pretend to himself that he recognised the boy who had sprung up from the asphodel-bushes a few miles from Mulai Idris.

He bethought him of a way to test his suspicions. He took from his wares an old rusty pistol, and began to polish it. A firearm he knew to be a lure to any Moor. Dimoussi drew nearer. Arden paid no attention, but continued to polish his pistol. A keen excitement was gaining on him, but he gave no sign. At last Dimoussi reached out his hand. Arden placed the pistol in it. Dimoussi turned the pistol over, and gave it back.

" It is no good."

Arden laughed.

" There is no better pistol in Agurai," said he contemptuously. In his ears there was the sound of Challoner's voice repeating and repeating : " He shot me with a brass-barrelled pistol—a brass-barrelled pistol."

The contempt in his tone stung Dimoussi.

" I have a better," said he, and at that the old woman touched him warningly on the arm. Dimoussi stopped at once, and the couple moved away.

Arden wondered whether this was the end. There was a chance that it was not. Dimoussi might return to compare his pistol with Arden's, and to establish its superiority. Arden waited all the evening in a strong suspense ; and at ten o'clock, when he was alone, Dimoussi stepped noiselessly into the shelter, and laid his brass-barrelled pistol on the ground in the light of the lamp.

" It is better than yours. It comes from Agadhir, in the Sus country, where the best pistols are made. See, those letters prove it."

Arden had no doubt that he had now Challoner's murderer sitting at his side. But he looked at the letters on the pistol-barrel to which Dimoussi pointed. The letters were in English, and made up the name " Bennett." There was also engraved upon the base of the barrel " London." The pistol was an old horse-pistol of English make. Even its period was clear to Arden. For above the lion and the crown was the letter C. Arden pointed to those marks.

" What do they mean ? "

" They are charms to prevent it missing."

Arden said nothing. His thoughts were busy on other matters. This pistol was a pistol of the time of Charles II, of the time of the Tangier siege.

" How long have you had it ? " he asked.

" My father owned it before me."

"And his father before him ? "

" Very likely. I do not know."

Arden's excitement was increasing. He began to see dim, strange possibilities. Suppose, he reasoned, that this pistol had travelled up to Mequinez in the possession of an English prisoner. Suppose that by some chance that prisoner had escaped and wandered ; and suddenly he saw something

which caught his breath away. He bent down and examined the brass covering to the heel of the butt. Upon that plate there there was engraved a crest. Yes ! And the crest was Challoner's !

Arden kept his face bent over that pistol. Questions raced through his mind. Had that pistol belonged to Luke Challoner, who had turned renegade two hundred years ago ? Had he married in his captivity ? Had his descendants married again, until all trace of their origin was lost, except this pistol and five words of English, and the name of " Englishwoman " ? Ah, but, if so, who was the Frenchwoman ?

It was quite intelligible to Arden why Dimoussi had slain Challoner. Fanaticism was the sufficient reason. But supposing Dimoussi were a descendant of Luke ! It was all very strange. Challoner was the last of his name. Had the name been extinguished by a Challoner ?

Arden returned to Mequinez the next day, and, making search through the help of the Bashaw, who was his friend, amongst the documents which existed, he at last came upon the explanation.

The renegades, who were made up not merely of English prisoners from Tangier, but of captives of many nationalities taken by the Salee pirates, had, about the year 1700, become numerous enough to threaten Mequinez. Consequently the Sultan had one fine morning turned them all out of the town through the Renegade's Gate, and bidden them go south and found a city for themselves.

They had founded Agurai ; they had been attacked by the Beni M'tir ; with diminishing numbers they had held their own ; they had intermarried with the natives ; and now, two hundred years later, all that remained of them were the Frenchwoman, Dimoussi, and his mother.

There could be no doubt that Challoner had been murdered because he was a European, by one of his own race.

There could be no doubt that the real owner of the Challoner property, which went to a distant relation on the female side, was a Moorish youth living at the village of Agurai.

But Arden kept silence for a long while.

The Three Tall Sons

By LORD DUNSANY

AND at last Man raised on high the final glory of his civilisation, the towering edifice of the ultimate city.

Softly beneath him in the deeps of the earth purred his machinery fulfilling all his needs, there was no more toil for man. There he sat at ease discussing the Sex Problem.

And sometimes painfully out of forgotten fields, there came to his outer door, came to the furthest rampart of the final glory of Man, a poor old woman begging. And always they turned her away. This glory of Man's achievement, this city was not for her.

It was Nature that thus came begging in from the fields, whom they always turned away.

And away she went again alone to her fields.

And one day she came again, and again they sent her hence. But her three tall sons came, too.

" These shall go in," she said. " Even these my sons to your city."

And the three tall sons went in.

And these are Nature's sons, the forlorn one's terrible children, War, Famine and Plague.

Yea and they went in there and found Man unawares in his city still poring over his Problems, obsessed with his civilisation, and never hearing their tread as those three came up behind.

On Rivers

A Deep Majestic Stream

I FANCY I can trace much of what is good and pleasant in my own heterogeneous compound to my early companionship with the glorious river. In the warmth of my youthful enthusiasm I used to clothe it with moral attributes, and almost to give it a soul. I admired its frank, bold, honest character, its noble sincerity and perfect truth. Here was no specious, smiling surface, covering the dangerous sand-bar or perfidious rock, but a stream deep as it was broad, and bearing with honourable faith the bark that trusted to its waves. I gloried in its simple, quiet, majestic, epic flow, ever straight-forward. Once, indeed, it turns aside for a moment, forced from its course by opposing mountains, but it struggles bravely through them, and immediately resumes its straight-forward march. Behold, thought I, an emblem of a good man's course through life, ever simple, open and direct; or if, overpowered by adverse circumstances, he deviates into error, it is but momentary, he soon recovers his onward and honourable career, and continues it to the end of his pilgrimage. The Hudson is, in a manner, my first and last love, and after all my wanderings and seeming infidelities, I return to it with a heart-felt preference over all the other rivers in the world. WASHINGTON IRVING.

On the Thames at Richmond

THE river! the beautiful river! there is no overrating that. Brimming to its very banks of meadow or of garden; clear, pure, and calm, as the bright summer sky, which is reflected in clearer brightness from its bosom;—no praise can be too enthusiastic for that glorious stream. How gracefully it glides through the graceful bridge! And how the boats become it! And how pretty those boats are, from the small skiff of the market-woman laden with fruit and flowers, or the light-green pleasure vessel with its white awning and its gay freight of beaux and belles, to the heavy steam-boat which comes walloping along with a regular mechanical combination of noise and motion, rumpling the quiet waters, and leaving a track of waves which vary most agreeably the level lake-like surface of the tranquil river. Certainly, the Thames is the pleasantest highway in his Majesty's dominions. MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

GO up and watch the new-born rill
Just trickling from its mossy bed,
Streaking the heath-clad hill
With a bright emerald thread.

Canst thou her bold career foretell,
What rocks she shall o'erleap or rend,
How far in Ocean's swell
Her freshening billows send?

JOHN KEBLE.

Water Legends

THE ancients attributed many fictitious properties to rivers. Some were said to make thieves blind; to injure the memory; to cause fruitfulness; and to cure barrenness. Josephus even mentions a river in Palestine, which, in compliment to the Sabbath, rested every seventh day! Rivers are held sacred, too, in China; and we find the Emperor in one of the Pekin gazettes feeling "grateful to the God of the Yellow River," because no accident had occurred in consequence of its having overflowed its banks. CHARLES BUCKE.

Where Runs the Wharfe

FIRST up Shodebank, the steepest hill I ever saw a road carried over in England: for it mounts up in a straight line (without any other repose for the horses, than by placing stones every now and then behind the wheels) for a full mile. Then the road goes on a level along the brow of this high hill over Rumbold Moor, till it gently descends into Wharfedale, so they call the Vale of the Wharfe: and a beautiful vale it is: well wooded, well cultivated, well inhabited, but with light crags at distance, that border the green country on either hand, through the midst of it, deep, clear, full to the brink and of no inconsiderable breadth runs in long windings the river; how it comes to pass that it should be so fine and copious a stream here, and at Tadcaster (so much lower) should have nothing but a wide stony channel without water, I cannot tell you. Thomas Gray.

I LOVE all hardy exercise
That makes one strain and quiver;
And best of all I love and prize
This boating on our river.
I to row and you to steer,
Gay shall be Life's trip, my dear:
You to steer and I to row,
All is bright where'er we go.

We push from off the bank; again
We're free upon the waters;
The happiest of the sons of men,
The fairest of earth's daughters.
And I row, and I row;
The blue floats above us as we go:
And you steer, and you steer,
Framed in gliding wood and water, O my dear!

James Thomson (B.V.)

The Myth of the Mountain Stream

ALL descriptions must fail to render the impression of unmixed joyousness and artless grace that is left by a sight of the Ilse as it plunges over the fantastic fragments of rock that hem its path. Here its water spurts up wildly or overflows in a foaming cascade, there it jets in delicate curves from every cleft and cranny of the rocks, and again trips below over the pebbles like a merry maiden. Yes, the myth is true: the Ilse is a princess who leaps down the mountain side with the light laughter of youth. See her white foam-robe shimmering in the sunshine, her silver streamers fluttering in the wind, her diamonds sparkling and flashing! The tall beech-trees beside her are like solemn fathers regarding with secret satisfaction the waywardness of a favourite daughter; the white birches nod their heads like aunts, proud, but alarmed at the girl's mad leaps; the stately oak looks down like a surly uncle, who knows he must pay the piper; the birds of the air trill out their approval; the flowers on the bank murmur tenderly, "O, take us with thee, take us with thee, sister dear!" But the merry maiden will not stay; on she bounds, and suddenly lays hold of the dreaming poet, and there streams upon him a flowery rain of rippling sunbeams and sunny ripples, and my senses fail with too much loveliness, and nothing but an echo of a flute-like voice remains in my ear. Heinrich Heine.

London Rivercraft

THE Morning was fair and bright, and we had a Passage thither [to Gravesend], I think, as pleasant as can be conceiv'd; for, take it with all its Advantages, particularly the number of fine Ships you are always sure of seeing by the Way, there is nothing to equal it in all the Rivers of the World. The yards of Deptford and of Woolwich are noble Sights; and give us a just idea of the great Perfection to which we are arrived in building those Floating Castles, and the Figure which we may always make in Europe among the other Maritime Powers. That of Woolwich, at least, very strongly imprinted this idea on my Mind; for, there was now on the Stocks there the *Royal Anne*, supposed to be the largest Ship ever built, and which contains ten Carriage Guns more than had ever yet equipped a First-rate.

We saw likewise several Indiamen just returned from their Voyage. These are, I believe, the largest and finest Vessels which are anywhere employed in Commercial Affairs. The Colliers, likewise, which are very numerous, and even assemble in Fleets, are Ships of great bulk; and, if we descend to those used in the American, African, and European Trades, and pass through those which visit our own Coasts, to the small Craft that lye between Chatham and the Tower, the whole forms a most pleasing Object to the Eye, as well as highly warming to the Heart of an Englishman, who has any Degree of Love for his Country, or can recognize any effect of the Patriot in his Constitution.

Henry Fielding.

THERE'S a rowing man that listens and his heart is crying out
In the City as the sun sinks low;
For the barge, the eight, the Isis, and the coach's whoop and shout,
For the minute-gun, the counting and the long dishevelled rout,
For the howl along the tow-path and a fate that's still in doubt,
For a roughened oar to handle and a race to think about
In the land where the dead dreams go.

Alfred Noyes.

On the Dee Near Chester

SUDDENLY as with the trampling of cavalry—but all dressing accurately—and the water at the outer angle sweeping so much faster than that at the inner angle, as to keep the front of advance rigorously in line, violently careered round into our own placid watery vista a huge charging block of waters, filling the whole channel of the river, and coming down upon us at the rate of forty miles an hour . . . In fact, this watery breastwork, a perpendicular wall of water carrying itself as true as if controlled by a mason's plumbline, rode forward at such a pace, that obviously the fleetest horse or dromedary would have had no chance of escape. Many a decent railway even, among railways since born its rivals, would not have had above the third of a chance. Naturally, I had too short a time for observing much or accurately; and universally I am a poor hand at observing; else I should say, that this riding block of crystal waters did not gallop, but went at a long trot—that most frightful of paces in a tiger, in a buffalo, or in a rebellion of waters.

Thomas de Quincey.

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Exiles en Casserole

Romance and the Russian temperament in Soho

By I. A. R. WYLIE

THE Grand-Duchess Anna Maria dreaded the turning. All down Shaftesbury Avenue she could imagine anything she liked. She often did imagine that she was travelling incognita and had given her mother, Olga Androvana, and the whole court retinue the slip in order to shop like other people and see what it felt like. The glimpses that she caught of herself in the mirrors as she passed made the pretence an easy one. She looked so young and beautiful and assured and unobtrusively well-dressed. Anyone could have seen that she was a pretending princess. But the moment that she reached the corner of Denver Lane, Soho, the illusion crashed. Or rather, it was engulfed. A perpetual question that received every morning a different answer simply swept everything else out of sight. She would stand still, her heart beating till it sounded louder in her ears than the early traffic, and sick with dread.

Had Peter come? And if so, in what condition? And if not, where was Peter? How in this vast, amazing city would they ever find Peter again?

If she had been a little older she might have been able to laugh about it. Considering everything that had happened there was something very funny in Peter's representing a possible catastrophe. But she was only twenty-two, and at that age the detachment necessary to a sense of humour is not sufficiently developed. And, after all, a catastrophe is a catastrophe.

She always wished that she could know the worst at once and not have to wait until the swing doors had flapped their wings behind her; then she would be able to meet her mother's despair or high spirits with some sort of preparedness. But there was no warning—not even from Olga Androvana herself. Her round, child-like face might, and usually did, express terrific things, but what they were you couldn't tell until they had fairly burst over your head.

The sign was equally unhelpful. It hung high above the pavement from the wrought-iron bracket and swayed gently with a baffling air of magnificent self-sufficiency. It told you nothing except that in the whole of Soho there was nothing like it. Its imperial, double-headed eagle shone in dull gold against a background of royal blue, and wound glittering, carnivorous claws into the scrolled letter-work:

"Restaurant St. Petersburg."

"Petersburg," you understand; not "Petrograd," and much less "Leningrad."

Every time that the Grand-Duke turned the corner he saluted with his stick, military fashion. Thereby he not only insulted and challenged the whole Bolshevik Government, but he reminded himself that here and under his command was the last stronghold of the old régime. Here the heroic garrison held out against open assault and perfidious treachery. And from hence would pour forth the force that would one day sweep the usurpers to their just damnation. Meantime, the struggle was of a desperate character. There had been times when the Grand-Duke, who was also a general, had been nearly outmanœuvred and brought to surrender. As when the butcher—who was without doubt a Bolshevik emissary—had supplied pork that was past its prime, thereby shaking the faith of the most faithful. Nothing but a brimming glass of Veuve Cliquot all round had saved the situation—a masterly move—but, like so many masterly moves, very nearly disastrous. At least, the war chest had never properly recovered.

It is notorious that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. The weakest link in the Grand-Duke's chain was Peter Imovitch. That was why Peter Imovitch had become so tremendously important. It puzzled Olga Androvana, and even the Grand-Duke himself, that you couldn't any longer flog a sense of responsibility into Peter. It was the only possible thing to do with him. But the laws of this new country were peculiar. And it so happened that Peter

Imovitch was the only remaining member of the Grand-Ducal retinue who could cook. Obviously the Grand-Duke couldn't. He was a general. Olga Androvana, with her soft, white hands, had never been in a kitchen in her life. She had, moreover, an amiable conviction that the frequenters of the Restaurant Petersburg were distinguished guests whom it was her duty to receive with becoming honour—a perfectly harmless illusion, except that some of the less honourable had shown signs of sharing it with her. As to the Grand-Duchess Anna Maria—well, it was essential that someone should make out the bills and keep an eye on the waitresses, who were of the best Russian families, and very temperamental—someone with a head screwed on. And the Grand-Duchess Anna Maria knew, secretly and sadly, that ever since that night of nights the heads of her dear father and mother had come unscrewed for ever—not badly, just badly enough to make them pathetic and quite helpless.

After all, you couldn't wonder——.

So there was the Restaurant Petersburg and Peter Imovitch and his inimitable Bortch and his passion for Scotch whisky (which he couldn't manage in the least) and herself—a fantastic combination she couldn't have dreamed of in her most fantastic nightmares.

II

THERE was a fog that morning—a real London fog. The Grand-Duchess Anna Maria loved it. She loved the amazing silence and the magical sensation of being alone among six million people. She saw them, but they were only faceless shadows who flitted noiselessly in and out of the luminous yellow darkness, swerving away from her as though her warm, strong life frightened their ghostly insubstantiality. And it was fun losing oneself—taking wrong turnings—even though it meant a bad day for the Petersburg——.

At least a bad day from a business point of view.

Otherwise, the Grand-Duke, who didn't really believe in the business point of view at all, would be delighted. He would regard it as an act of that Providence who was very properly, but rather tortuously, working in the cause of things-as-they-had-been. Because it so happened that that very day there was to be a Special Session. There had been several sessions since the Petersburg opened its doors—special, ordinaries, and emergencies, and they were all heralded by such unmistakable signs that even the Grand-Duchess Anna Maria, who was considered too young to be involved, could not fail to be aware of them. Weeks beforehand habitués who had been on friendly or even intimate terms with everyone were transformed into complete strangers. They neither spoke nor smiled, and when they went out they thrust a large, heavily-sealed envelope into the Grand-Duke's hand as though it had been a tip.

At first Anna Maria had been very excited. A terrible home-sickness which she had kept smothered at the bottom of her heart, because she knew how thankful they ought to be, and that it was no good being home-sick, rose to the surface in a great surge of hope. She asked no questions. Instinctively she felt that it was better for her not to know what was really happening. But every morning she opened the newspapers with trembling hands, and when the Grand-Duke came back at night, throwing open the door of their one little sitting-room, as though to admit himself with proper dignity, she had always waited for the magic words: "My dears, the counter-revolution has triumphed; we are going home——"

But nothing had happened. The sessions went on. The strange young men and women appeared and vanished. The newspapers seemed to forget Russia altogether; they did not seem to care at all that there were Grand-Dukes and Duchesses dying of home-sickness. And gradually Anna Maria ceased to be excited.

Anyhow, here was a first-class conspiratorial fog, and the fact that she was lost in it didn't matter. Everybody would be too excited even to miss her, and on its yellowing tide her fancy would carry her anywhere she pleased—back home to her own room and her big four-posted bed, where presently her old nurse would come to wake her.

"Your Highness, darling, it's time to get up—and you've been having nightmares——"

A ghost swirled round the corner. It was exceptionally large and moving with a reckless speed, so Anna Maria, who had forgotten she wasn't alone in the world, lost her head. She felt like a small rudderless

boat overwhelmed by a leviathan going full speed, and her futile effort to dodge hastened the catastrophe. They collided, head on. For one moment she seemed to be flying through space, the next she was held fast in strong, unghostly arms. Then, with dignity, having been gently righted, she disentangled herself.

"Pardon."

"Pardon."

Neither moved. They stood staring through the opaque curtain that divided them. For the voice had spoken in Russian, and she had answered. It was as magic and sweet as sudden music. Perhaps being lost among six million people wasn't really very amusing; perhaps she was more home-sick than she knew. At any rate, sudden tears burnt her eyes, and she had an odd conviction, based on nothing at all, because his face was hidden, that her companion was no less moved. Reluctantly his supporting hand dropped from her arm.

"I hope I didn't hurt you?"

"Indeed, not at all; it was my fault."

"These dreadful fogs."

"Oh, no, I like them."

"Do you?"

She blushed hotly. She couldn't imagine why she had prolonged a formal apology into a conversation.

"I mean—you can imagine yourself anywhere——"

"Home?" the voice suggested.

"Yes—I suppose so."

"How nice. I was just thinking the same thing when I ran into you. That's why I burst into Russian. When you answered I didn't know what to believe—the dream or this. Even now"—he hesitated, and she felt that he was smiling—"well, I'm afraid to move in case I should wake up."

They were silent. There didn't seem anything more to say. Obviously the encounter led nowhere. If only they could have seen each other the matter would have been so much simpler. She could have smiled and bowed and passed on. But a bow and a smile would have been lost on him, and it was necessary to find a gracious and concluding sentence. Or if he had known that she was a grand-duchess—— But he naturally didn't. It was awkward, but rather pleasant. Being a grand-duchess was such a lonely occupation.

"Well, I must try not to run down anyone else," Anna Maria said gaily. "It might be a Bolshevik next time. Good-bye, monsieur——"

There was an imperceptible pause.

"Good-bye, mademoiselle."

She gave him the invisible bow and smile, and walked with dignity straight into the wall of a house. It was a ridiculous thing to have done. But she was lost. The wall seemed to envelop her. She could only stare at it in a sort of helpless indignation.

"A Bolshevik would be less unrelenting, mademoiselle."

Gently she was turned about. And this time the hand on her arm did not release her.

"You must let me see you safely to your destination," the voice said.

"It's not necessary. I was just confused."

"As a fellow-countryman," the voice insisted.

"I couldn't dream of taking you out of your way."

"But you wouldn't be, anyway."

Which was so flagrant that they both laughed. He walked beside her, close to the wall, his arm through hers, guiding her.

"I don't know where we're going," the voice said, "but if we run into a motor-bus I can push it aside for you. I'm awfully strong."

The Grand-Duchess was too bewildered to say anything. She stood outside herself, as it were, and watched herself with a half-disapproving, and half-admiring excitement. No one had ever treated her like this before. In the old days everyone had been so formal that formality had seemed natural and painless. It was only since she had been in exile, among people who were intimate and friendly with one another, that she had begun to feel her loneliness. Even the waitresses, who were of the best families, had taken on new manners. They joked with one another; they had "affairs." Feodora Velegorskaia had been to a Thé Dansant with a conspirator, and was rumoured to be engaged. No one had ever so much as dreamed of taking Anna Maria to a Thé Dansant. She was of Imperial blood. But sometimes the Grand-Duchess felt that she was so splendidly different from everyone that she was like an outcast.

"Now if you would tell me where you live?" the voice said.

"But I'm not going home—I'm going down town."

"Had you better? You can't shop on a day like this."

"I'm not shopping—I'm working."

He was evidently startled into rudeness.

"Working? What for?"

"For a living."

"Oh, yes—I see——"

"People do, you know," she informed him coldly.

"Of course. I do myself. It's become quite the fashion, hasn't it? I teach Russian—when I can get anyone to teach."

"And I wait," said the Grand-Duchess.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I mean—I wait on people in a restaurant—a Russian restaurant."

"I'm glad," her companion said after a pause, and with great earnestness.

He did not explain why he was glad, and Anna Maria did not ask him. She was too concerned with her own amazingness. She had not lied. She had gone out of her way to tell the truth, but not the whole truth, and it seemed that half the truth can be as misleading as a whole lie. She knew that she had misled her companion hopelessly. She could tell by the slightly firmer pressure of his hand. After all, there was nothing improper or disrespectful in a teacher of languages taking the arm of a waitress from a restaurant. But if she had said: "I am the Grand-Duchess Anna Maria Androvana, daughter of the Grand-Duke Paul Michael Stanislas, who keeps a restaurant because even grand-dukes and duchesses have to eat," he would have dropped her arm at once. He would have been painfully embarrassed and ashamed. For his sake—and, after all, he evidently meant well—she had done the kindest thing.

And besides, it was oddly consoling to walk through a concealing fog arm-in-arm with a fellow-creature who was not more or less than a fellow-creature, and to whom you could say anything that came into your head. Of course, to be a leading member of a community pledged to plot and suffer and die to the last drop of their blood was wonderful, but it made every-day life a trifle heavy-going.

"If I knew where we wanted to go," the guide was saying, "I might have more chance of getting there. I think I really ought to know——"

"Leicester Square will be near enough," she told him.

"Couldn't we get any nearer?"

"No—I'd rather not."

"But why? You're Russian and I'm Russian and the restaurant's Russian. We ought to be properly introduced. It makes me quite hungry just to think of it. But perhaps it isn't real——"

"Real?"

"Real Russian."

"But it is——"

"Russian food? *Bortch*, *caviare*, *karlibiak*——"

"Oh yes—and *ouha*, the very best, when Peter's sober."

She sighed. At the thought of Peter her excitement dropped like a wounded bird. A street that spread itself at their feet in an uncharted, shoreless distance, lit by unearthly will-o'-the-wisp, added to her sudden forlornness. She was glad when her companion pressed her arm closer. It gave her a reassuring sense of his reality. She tried to imagine what he was like. Not old—tall. She had felt the strength of his hands. She was sure that he was slender with a dark face full of eagerness. And pain, too, perhaps. She did not know why she had thought of pain.

Once across the street his grip relaxed.

"This might be Piccadilly," he said, "and again it might not. I'm taking a chance on it. And who is Peter?"

"The cook."

"Who drinks?"

"It's the whisky," she explained. "Poor Peter—you see, he used to be able to drink vodka—just as much as he could get—and it didn't seem to make any difference. He was the strongest man in his regiment. And he can't believe that whisky is too much for him. It offends his pride——"

"Why don't they get another cook?"

"There isn't another—not like him. He used to work in the Imperial kitchens. People come from all over London. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

It was the fog. If she had been able to see him she would never have done it. But it was like talking aloud to herself:

"He's faithful. He doesn't mind about his wages. He feels as though he belonged——"

"To what?"

"Oh—to—to them."

He began to walk faster.

"Do you——?"

"Do I what?"

"Mind about your wages—belong—and all that——"

"They always feed and clothe me," she

explained with the same devastating truthfulness, "and they give me money—if there is any. But usually there isn't. I'm just a head-waitress. I wouldn't get work anywhere else. They're very kind."

"Oh," he said. And then after a moment with a kind of anger: "Poor child——"

She wondered how he knew that she was young; and as though he guessed her thoughts, she felt him turn towards her.

"You see, I've made up my mind about you. You're about twenty—and small—and very alone——"

It was so true that she felt like crying. She began to tell him about the loneliness.

"You see — the others — they're so different—they never let me forget. I've no one to talk to; that's why I'm talking to you. It's foolish of me—but you don't know who I am——"

"—And I wouldn't care," he said passionately.

Her hidden smile was sorrowful with her precocious wisdom. But she liked his fierce, angry certainty.

"Perhaps you would."

"I wouldn't. My friend's my friend. We've met in the dark. But I know you, I know that you're my kind——"

She liked that, too—it was so pitifully absurd.

"Your kind?" she murmured.

"We've both suffered," he said, "and we're both lonely."

(As though her loneliness made any difference! If one was a Grand-Duchess one *was* lonely.)

"Are you, too? Haven't you people?"

"They're dead. And yours——?"

"They're here. But they haven't any real friends; they couldn't have. And they're very, very poor."

"I'm glad," the young man repeated.

Why——?"

Because I'm poor. There's nothing between us——"

(As though poverty made one any less a grand-duchess! She felt tenderly towards him, and remorseful. It wasn't fair. Because this fantastic equality had tasted sweet she had let him believe things—things that weren't true and never could be true. She began to be afraid—not of him, but of his pain and shame—she wanted to escape.)

"Mademoiselle, this feels like Leicester Square. But we can't part here. You must let me——"

"Please—I know my way quite well now."

"We're fellow-exiles—friends. Don't you feel that?"

"You've been very kind——"

"Oh, it's not that. We've talked—in our own language. Why should you mind? Are you ashamed? I've told you that I'm poor, too—just a wretched teacher. I love you for being what you are so bravely."

"Please—oh, hush!"

For no one had ever spoken of loving her. She knew that no one ever would—not even if the counter-revolution swept them home to-morrow. A marriage would be arranged. But this complete, invisible stranger talked of loving—oh, it was pitiful.

"Won't you tell me where you live, your name?"

"What would be the use? We'll never see each other again."

"We haven't seen each other at all, yet. What does it matter? We know each other. Listen—my name's Paul Olinorf. Now tell me yours——"

They were standing close to one another. He had let go his hold. But she could feel his eagerness reaching out to her like warm hands.

"Please. You must. Because you know, as I do, that it matters frightfully."

She turned. She fled. She ran into the dark, as though dashing her head against a wall or being crushed to pulp under a motor-bus mattered nothing at all. He followed. She could hear his hurrying, stumbling footsteps—as reckless as her own. In a moment he would have overtaken her. She drew aside, pressing herself against the Square railings, and his shadow flitted past and was lost. At which triumph of strategy Anna Maria felt more forlorn than she had ever done in her life. But at least she had spared him a bitter humiliation. He had been so in earnest—almost as though he believed that there was destiny in their meeting—that the revelation would have been too cruel.

Poor young man!

Yes, she had done the right thing.

III

THE restaurant St. Petersburg was full of fog and various forms of despair. A customer sat under the artistically shaded lamps which gave scarcely any light, and from time to time he rapped timidly on a

charmingly designed, but empty cup. No one took any notice of him. Feodora Velegorskaia, the only waitress who had arrived, stood by the window in a graceful attitude and gazed out into the darkness with the rapt expression habitual to her. The customer had thought her very beautiful when she had taken his order. But now he wanted his coffee. Being English, he had absurd notions about time.

The Grand-Duchess Olga Androvana sat behind the counter and wrung her hands and prayed audibly to the little ikon in the far corner, whose red light burned with a consoling steadiness.

Anna Maria took in the situation at a glance. She knew that Peter was lost again, that the customer was waiting for something that would never happen, and that her mother was going to have hysterics.

" I'm afraid you've been kept waiting," she said. " If you'd give me your order I'll see to it at once—at least, if I can. You see, our cook hasn't come. But I'll do my best."

She was so entirely charming that he smiled back.

" It's only coffee," he said. " But I don't mind——"

She nodded and went into the kitchen. On the way she managed to pinch Feodora Velegorskaia, which was vulgar and unprecedented and quite futile, because, though hurt, Feodora had no notion of what was expected of her. The coffee incident had long since been lost in Slavonic melancholy, and she could only suppose that Her Imperial Highness was feeling temperamental. She often did herself.

Olga Androvana came into the kitchen and wept. It seemed that the Grand-Duke had been looking for Peter ever since seven o'clock. Peter had received a back instalment of his wages the night before, so the very worst was to be expected. It only proved how wrong it was to give these people wages at all—they didn't know what to do with them. They were like children. A misunderstanding of this truth had led to Peter's downfall, the Russian Revolution, and the fact that there would be no lunch.

"And twenty guests coming—our oldest friends—the hand of God is against us. I have always said it. We should never, never have left our Holy Russia. It is a punishment."

Olga Androvana talked loudly and passionately, having always done so. Her daughter sighed and made the coffee. She knew it was of no use to point out that Holy Russia had given them small choice in the matter, and that much of an unacceptable nature. She knew her mother had forgotten, because it was not possible to remember. Also she knew very little about making coffee. But, as she pointed out to their solitary customer, it was at least hot.

" I'm sure it is," he agreed earnestly, and went on to say that he had heard the decorations were very beautiful, and he only wished he could see them.

" Yes, they are worth seeing," she said graciously. " They were made after designs by a great Russian artist. And when our cook is at home the food is worth while, too. You must come again."

He said he would, and when he went out, colliding with the Grand-Duke and Peter, he gave her sixpence. It was an entirely disproportionate tip, but he felt that he could not give her less.

After that the family had the " Petersburg " and their troubles to themselves.

What with Peter and Olga Androvana and the futurist wall paintings, which kept on coming in and out of the fog like lost souls in torment, there was something nightmarish about the scene. The Grand-Duke was small and thin, and Peter huge and unwieldy as a half-empty sack, and he refused absolutely to sit down. He stood to address the meeting, his red hair on end, his arm wound affectionately about his supporter's neck, and his voice submerging even Olga Androvana's passionate interruptions.

" Little brothers and sisters—listen to me. I am a true Russian. I am no scoundrelly Bolshevik. I deny the equality of man. No man is my equal. There is no man living who can drink with me and stand upright on his two legs. As to this whisky, it is not fit for dogs. It is drink for children. I have drunk two bottles of it and God witnesses that I am sober. He who says differently—I will slit his throat."

" He ought to be flogged," Olga Androvana moaned. " He ought to be sent to Siberia. Paul, what are you doing that you do nothing ? "

The Grand-Duke mopped the moisture from his forehead.

" My dear, I have done everything that can be done. Thank God, this didn't happen on the street. Peter, my good fellow, better put your head under the tap."

This likewise Peter refused to do until

Anna Maria took him gently by the arm; then he broke down and wept.

"Very well, your Highness, darling, since you wish it I will put my head under the tap. But remember it is for your sake."

An hour later there was peace in the Restaurant Petersburg. The fog had lifted a little and pleasant odours sweetened its acrid flavouring. One by one, the conspirators drifted in darkly. Olga Androvana, who could neither remember nor forget, swam among them like the hostess she believed herself to be, and they bowed and kissed her hand.

IV

THE moment he saw the sign, he knew. It was just what he might have expected, but his expression as he stood in the middle of the pavement, gazing upwards, was so dark with scornful bitterness, that several people stopped to find out what was distorting an otherwise kindly-looking young man. As they could discover nothing but a signboard artistically decorated with a double-headed eagle, they decided that he was mad, and passed on. But then they hadn't seen what he saw—that the graceful talons were red with blood, and that the curved beak had human flesh between its scissor-like edges. If they had known that he saw these things they would have been shocked. For it was much too early in the evening for young men—nice young men—to be seeing visions.

Paul Olinorf scoffed ferociously. If it amused these traitor aristocrats to flaunt their infernal twopenny-halfpenny flag in the faces of people who neither knew nor cared what it meant, let them do so. St. Petersburg, indeed! Let them come back to Leningrad and say what they thought there. Then at least one could respect them—for so long as they remained to be respected. But this was contemptible. He wanted to laugh, and still more to tear the thing down and stamp it out of recognition. He wished he hadn't orders to go cautiously.

Anyhow, he wouldn't go in. He didn't trust himself.

He began to walk past. A prettily written menu hanging against a royal blue curtain caught his eye. He stopped to look at it. He had not known that he was hungry, but he knew now. Pilaff, Bortch, real Russian caviare—*Riabchuk-en-casserole*. It read like poetry. Somebody came out of the swing-doors, bringing with them a whiff that was like the smell of sea to a land-locked sailor, or of burning wood to a countryman. He caught the sound of Russian voices.

Caviare! And the girl might be here—the girl with the voice he couldn't forget. Anyway, it was his business to keep an eye on these good-for-nothing *emigrés*. And it would be amusing to order them about—make them wait on you, as your people had waited on theirs.

His hunger became suddenly almost savage.

¶

IT was Olga Androvana who saw him first. She had just said good-bye to Prince Diminoff. In justice to that personage, it must be admitted that he had intended to pay his bill, but the Grand-Duchess had waved the offer grandly aside: "You are our guest, Prince," and he had kissed her hand instead. Then Olga Androvana, feeling warm about the heart and quite sure that everything was going to be all right to-morrow, had caught sight of a stranger seated under one of the most alarming of the futurist frescoes. She called him a stranger because he had certainly never been to the St. Petersburg before, but she knew his face. She knew him so well that she clambered down into the cellar where the Grand-Duke was painstakingly uncorking wine, and insisted on his coming to the surface at once.

"Because," as she said, "I'm sure it's a dear friend whom I have carelessly forgotten."

The Grand-Duke, a bottle in each hand, gazed surreptitiously. He agreed that she might be right.

"His face is certainly familiar. I have an idea that he is the son of Count Polisky—young Alexis. I never saw him, but there is something about the whole cut of the face. Let us ask Anna. She will know; she remembers all the young men."

Olga Androvana had the impulsiveness of youth. But she found her daughter, perched in the cashier's box, and studying Prince Diminoff's unpaid bill, tiresomely unresponsive.

"But, mother, if you do this sort of thing how can you pay the rent? And you know what the landlord said——"

"Child, never mind the landlord. He knows quite well who we are. The Prince is an old friend. Since when have friends

paid each other for their hospitality? But look at the strange young man under the figure of Spring. Your father and I are sure we have seen him somehow."

Anna Maria looked up. But, as a matter of fact, she had noticed the stranger long since. She had been struck at once by the dark, well-featured face and its expression of furious melancholy, and by the fact that he frowned alternately at Feodora and Katrina, as though he wanted to kill one of them, and couldn't make up his mind which. Now, for the first time evidently, he saw her mother and herself, for he flushed violently, half-rose from his seat and then sat down again, covering his face with his hand and staring at his menu.

"You see," Olga Androvana exclaimed triumphantly, "he remembers us, too. It *is* Alexis Polisky without a doubt. I remember his dear father when he was young. I shall speak to him."

Anna Maria laid her hand firmly on her mother's arm.

"I shouldn't. It is evident that he doesn't want to be recognised. He may have serious reasons—political reasons."

"Quite—quite. I shall be discreet. But just a sign; he seems so lonely."

"Mother!"

But it is impossible to stop people who believe that everything they do must naturally be right, because they were born that way, and the Grand-Duchess sailed off to brush imaginary crumbs from the stranger's table, and in doing so whispered:

"You are welcome, sir. You are among friends."

And smiled and nodded with profound significance.

Probably the expression of the stranger's face as he looked up would have startled her into indiscretion, but at that moment the restaurant doors flapped warningly, and a man came in whom the Grand-Duchess had never seen before in her life. He wore a bowler hat, a fawn overcoat tightly buttoned, thick boots, and an air of being generally disliked.

The Grand-Duchess, with unerring vision, knew at once that he was not the sort of guest that the St. Petersburg cared to welcome. But she was kind. Her station demanded kindness. She towered over him, gracious and relentless.

"I am most sorry, but you see—don't you?—all our tables are engaged."

The man eyed her bleakly.

"I haven't come for a table, it's the rent I want," he said.

V

PAUL OLINORF had had more than time to study his surroundings, and in spite of himself he felt at home. It was as though a fragment of Holy Russia had been dropped into the midst of this alien city, complete with colour, noise, charm and incompetence. Even the young men who brooded over their tables or bent towards each other, whispering passionately, were familiar. They were plotting. He knew, because he had plotted himself. The method was the same, though the positions were reversed. They were the hunted and oppressed, and he had become the hunter and the oppressor. The thought made him oddly uncomfortable.

Presently he remembered that he was in search of a voice. He looked at Feodora and Katrina as they moved with graceful languor among the tables and wondered. They were both lovely in their way. Either of them might have walked beside him in that romantic darkness, and he was disappointed that his heart gave him no clue. Once certain, his course would be clear to him. He would take her by the hand and explain simply and frankly: "I love you. I fell in love with your voice, and I am not poor. I am a powerful and important personage, and if you could love me, too, we will go home to-morrow."

And if she said, as no doubt she would say, that it was absurd, he would agree—adding that it also happened to be true.

Katrina passed him and he waylaid her. He ordered Bortch and she nodded without speaking, and probably without listening, for she had lovely and distracting thoughts of her own. This was not what he wanted. He bent towards her and looked up into her face and smiled.

"Do you remember the fog in Leicester Square?" he asked.

He knew at once that he had made a mistake. Her voice was glacial:

"I beg your pardon——?"

"It doesn't matter," Olinorf said wearily.

On the whole he was relieved. He realised that his heart had spoken in its own fashion. It had been silent. There remained the second waitress. After all, she had a kinder face. He was looking for her when he saw the Grand-Duchess and

Anna Maria for the first time. And they were looking at him—hard—as though they knew him.

The left-over inhibitions of youth stick like burrs. He half-rose and only by a strong effort of the will forced himself to sit down again. The blood pounded in his ears and he shivered violently. As the Grand-Duchess bore down upon him reason fled before her. It was like an old childish nightmare. The mysterious whisper of welcome sounded like the cruellest irony. He felt that in a minute the whole pack would be upon him. Then suddenly the spell broke. He saw how funny it all was—how frightfully, deliciously funny. Whether she recognised him or not—it didn't matter. He had only to announce himself to humiliate them—these boys—this foolish, futile old woman—and that girl in the cashier's box, whose lovely, insolent unawareness was one of his boyhood's sharpest memories. And he wanted to humiliate them—brutally, yet subtly and keenly, so that they wouldn't forget to their dying day.

He was so fiercely excited by the thought that it took him several minutes to realise that neither the Grand-Duchess nor anyone else was taking the least notice of him. The focus of attention had, in fact, shifted to a commonplace person who stood planted in the middle of the St. Petersburg, tight-buttoned and impenetrably set on whatever purpose had brought him thither. Quite evidently that purpose was no good one. He looked insolent. Though the Grand-Duchess spoke earnestly and kindly to him, he did not so much as remove his hat. The Grand-Duke fluttered among the conspirators and the conspirators wilted and fell silent. The other guests smiled ironically. Very few of them had been served, and their opinion was obvious. These feckless foreigners!

Paul Olinorf found that he disliked them. It was unpleasant, but he disliked everyone. He even faintly disliked himself. But he was not going to miss the chance that fate had thrown straight into his hands. He got up and went over to the cashier's box, with a slow stride that was intentionally arrogant.

"I am Russian, too," he said. "What is the trouble? Can I help?"

She answered him with a whimsical impatience.

"It's the rent," she said, "and if you're Russian, too, you can't——"

A kind of cloud covered his eyes. He heard himself ask: "How much?" and out of the queer darkness the voice answered. He put his hand to his pocket. He acted with calm and deliberation, but he hardly knew what he was doing. He was torn by a succession of emotions—amazement, anger, a bitter triumph and something not definable.

"Will he take a cheque?"

"If it's English," the man said. "None of your foreign trash."

He wrote slowly. All eyes were upon him. He was the deliverer. Even the English outsiders looked respectful. The Grand-Duke and Duchess hovered in the background.

He signed, blotted the counterfoil and pushed the cheque across the counter. He bent towards her.

"Do *you* remember the fog in Leicester Square?" he asked.

She met his eyes. Perhaps she did not see their hard malice, or perhaps she saw beyond it. She flushed deeply, but her gaze never wavered.

"Yes, Paul Olinorf," she said. "I do—"

VI

THEY walked together down St. Martin's Lane and across Trafalgar Square (where on account of the dangerous traffic he took her arm), through the Admiralty Arch, and so at last into St. James's Park. They had met three times in their lives, yet throughout that prolonged walk their silence expressed a grim intimacy—a violent understanding which was only waiting its moment to explode.

The Grand-Duchess Anna Maria prepared herself. She knew what he was suffering, and her heart was full of gentleness and pity. She would brush his unhappy apologies aside and not only explain how everything had happened, but make him feel that she herself cared nothing about her rank—more especially as he was so exactly as she had imagined him. If he were a prince incognito so much the better. But the main thing was that they were fellow-exiles and very lonely.

Meantime, their silence had become painful. She had rehearsed a charming little opening twice, when he turned on her

"You lied to me," he said.

It was not what she had expected Thrown rudely from her gracious elevation

the Grand-Duchess vanished in clouds and thunder, leaving an ordinary human being smarting from a sense of outrage.

"I did not," she said.

"You did——"

By an effort she rescued their conversation from a vulgar and childish level.

"I have never lied," she explained with dignity.

"You told me you were a waitress——"

"I am——"

"A poor waitress."

"We are poor. We couldn't even pay the rent. You can't be poorer than that."

"You misled me."

"You misled me, too. A teacher of languages! Was *that* the truth?"

"Partly."

"It wasn't the truest part. Teachers don't draw cheques for fifty pounds as though it were a nothing at all——"

"Grand-Duchesses aren't waitresses——"

"Yes, they are; they have to be."

Paul Olinorf muttered something, but she was too angry and disturbed to listen.

"You ask me to meet you because you have done us a great kindness, and, much against my personal inclination, I consented. You might at least behave like a gentleman——"

"I'm not a gentleman," he answered bitterly.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know who you are."

"My name is Paul Olinorf."

"So you say."

"Don't you believe it?"

"I don't know what to believe. Mother thinks you are a son of Count Polisky——"

"That's why you came, I suppose."

"It isn't."

"You know a great many people you would be wiser not to know."

"Thank you. What do you mean?"

"Those young men."

"They are of the noblest Russian families——"

"—And addle-pated fools, which is worse."

"They mean well," she argued with less firmness.

"They mean nothing at all," he retorted passionately. "They just talk. They eat your food and they don't pay."

"It's poor mother. She doesn't understand—and father is too kind-hearted." He laughed and she stamped her foot. "He is—he's the gentlest-hearted man in the world."

"Even tigers may be kind to tigers," he jeered.

"Do you mean that we are tigers—mother and I?"

He had meant it. Now, looking out of the corners of his eyes at her girl's face flushed and quivering on the verge of tears, he temporised.

"I mean—you'd be kind to your own sort."

"We've never been unkind to anyone."

"You don't know what you are talking about——" He broke off with his bitter, exasperated laugh. "I beg your pardon. I forgot that Your Imperial Highness is not accustomed to the rough sincerities of real life."

She had stopped. It had evidently been her intention to leave him then and there. But something in his expression made her hesitate.

"I am only twenty-two, monsieur. But I have seen my home burnt to ashes. Men have spat in my face and said unspeakable things to me. I have been shut for hours in a rat-infested hole waiting for death. It is you who do not know of what you are talking—or to whom——"

He flushed darkly and made her a curt bow that was not ironical.

"I do beg your pardon—you are right." And then, after a second, in which he seemed to be struggling with himself: "If I had been there—it wouldn't have happened—not like that."

"What could a single man have done against them all?"

He did not answer, and she walked on, but more slowly. "You are very angry with me. I don't know why. We ran into one another by accident. It wasn't my fault. We talked like friends. We were both exiles, and it made me happy to talk to a Russian who didn't know and who treated me like an equal. I was very lonely and perhaps very foolish. But I meant no harm."

He thrust his hands deep into his coat pockets.

"What do you mean—lonely? With all these precious friends of yours?"

"Not friends. They couldn't be. To them I'm always the Grand-Duchess. They can never face the truth."

"What is the truth?"

"That I'm just a waitress in a restaurant, and if they don't pay for their meals I shan't get my wages."

They both laughed, but unwillingly, like

unhappy people who have been overtaken by an impish sense of humour.

He was silent—angry because of the mist before his eyes. A sickening nostalgia had him by the heart.

"Your friends are a shiftless crowd, anyhow," he said.

"They're not."

"You all are," he amended brutally.

She felt queerly nonplussed and angry to the point of stammering incoherence.

"Even if we are—what has that got to do with you?"

He retorted with complete inconsequence:

"Do you know how many Russian restaurants there are in London?"

"How should I?"

"I don't know, either. But I think I must have been in all of them. I was looking for you—for your voice."

"Why—why did you do that?"

"Because I had fallen in love with you."

In sheer consternation she laughed.

"How absurd." Too late she saw his face—dark and set under the insult. "I mean—you couldn't—you hadn't seen me—we had scarcely spoken—things like that don't happen."

"Perhaps not in your class. I come of very simple people. It happened to me. I thought you were like myself—that you were lonely and poor and that we might become friends. It seemed like fate. You must have laughed to yourself, and when you had had your fun out of the absurd adventure you ran away."

She held up a trembling hand in protest.

"I didn't want to hurt you. I liked you too much. It was stupid of me to run away. What does it matter who I am?"

"It matters everything," he said in a hard voice.

"It doesn't—it really doesn't. I won't let it matter. Nobody has ever been my friend before. I don't care."

"But I care."

"You don't need to—you said you wouldn't."

"I didn't know then."

She turned to him with a proud sweetness.

"If I choose to forget."

"It has nothing to do with what you choose."

"But of course it has."

"It's what I choose." He spoke violently, insultingly. "I hate you: ever since I was a child I've hated you. I've lived for nothing but to destroy the lot of you, if I could. I would rather have fallen in love with a hunchback—with the daughter of the devil himself."

Suddenly the storm abated between them. They walked in frozen, consternated silence. After a few minutes she said in a small, quiet voice:

"I don't think I understand at all."

He answered with an equal deliberation:

"Your grandfather had my grandfather flogged to death. And my father organised that section of the Revolution which drove you out of the country. As for me, I am an agent in the Bolshevik Secret Service. If any of your friends tried to go back to Russia they would be arrested on the frontier."

She made a little gesture of polite acknowledgment.

"Thank you. It is kind of you to warn us."

"Not that any of them will try," he added contemptuously.

They walked a few steps farther. But it was obviously the end of everything. She stopped at last and faced him, drawing a quick, unsteady breath like a sigh.

"So that when you lent us that money it was in order to make us ridiculous—to humiliate us?"

"Yes, Your Imperial Highness."

"And you asked me to meet you so that you could tell me?"

"Yes," he repeated doggedly.

She half-closed her eyes as though she were trying to see him from a long way off, and the arrogance of it brought the blood back into his face in a hot torrent.

"The money will be returned to you to-morrow. Good day, monsieur."

He bowed to her like a marionette.

"Good day, Your Imperial Highness."

Whereat they turned and walked rapidly away from one another.

And only the next day it occurred to him that her eyes might have been blind with tears.

VII

IT was the last chance.

Even the Grand-Duke realised it. As for the Grand-Duchess, she became more than ever convinced that they ought never to have left Russia. Which was her way of reacting to an overdraft, and the bank's terse intimation that, Grand-Duke or no Grand-Duke, things couldn't go on like that.

When she saw her mother growing vaguer and more helpless, wrapping herself up against the reality in a cloud of dreams, Anna Maria grew very angry. She did not know who she was angry with until Prince Diminoff, having dined exceedingly well, was preparing to pay with a neat compliment and a courtly bow; whereat Anna Maria held the plate with the bill unavoidably under his princely nose.

" I've included the last three dinners," she exclaimed pleasantly. " We can't let accounts run on too long, you know. We don't get credit ourselves."

The princely nose grew very red. There was something piteous in the look he threw her, as though the last piece of solid ground had collapsed under his feet.

" He was our oldest friend; he will never come again," said the Grand-Duke afterwards.

"A good thing—this isn't a free-meal kitchen," said the Grand-Duchess Anna Maria loudly. And the gallant conspirators wilted in their places, and when they went out, having painstakingly paid their reckoning, they bowed to her as though she were dangerous, and she held open the door and said: " Thank you, sir," in a way which must have broken their spirit for ever.

"*No one* will ever come again," said the Grand-Duke, and wept.

" I don't care," said Anna Maria, clearing up the tables passionately. " Better for no one to come if they don't pay. I'm tired of them. I'm tired of being a Grand-Duchess, and of all this silly pretence. From now onwards I'm plain Miss Anna Maria Anybody, trying to earn a living."

The little deserted restaurant seemed to rock with the explosion. Feodora Velegorskaia and Katrina Rostofzova began to work from sheer panic, and the Grand-Duke followed his daughter from table to table, fluttering his hands like a frightened, anxious bird.

" My dear, what do you mean? What are you going to do? What *can* we do? "

She stopped an instant to consider him, and for the first time he realised how changed she was. She seemed taller and older, and there was a pathetic spareness about the lines of her young face that made him even more unhappy.

" We've started all wrong," she said. " We've been play-acting—*How Royalty Lives in Exile*—and nonsense like that. We're not royalty; we never will be again. We're restaurant-keepers who don't know our job. And we're not in exile, because this is our home—the only home we'll ever have, and it's humbug to pretend anything different."

The Grand-Duchess sat down weakly behind the counter.

" She has gone mad," she wailed.

The Grand-Duke peered at his daughter pleadingly.

" What do you want us to do, my dear? "

" Begin again. We've got to drop our titles. We're not what we were, and we've got to show what we are. Take down that pretending old sign. Let's call ourselves 'The Jolly Russian'—anything you like. And advertise. Get real people to come. And work." She looked straight at Feodora and Katrina. "And work," she said.

The Grand-Duke shook his aching head.

"And who is going to do all this? " he asked.

The ex-Grand-Duchess Anna Maria wiped the last crumb from the last table.

" I am," she said.

So it came about that a Russian peasant dancing took the place of the carnivorous eagle. The Grand-Duchess's pearl ear-rings went to the pawnshop, and with the proceeds the news was sent forth that the Russian Restaurant (Denver Lane), with its celebrated Russian chef (late of the Imperial Household), was opening on New Year's Eve under new management.

Tables to be booked in advance.

VIII

PAUL OLINORF found himself in the street by the purest accident, and happening to glance up at the sign which had caused his bitter indignation he saw that it was no more. And there in large letters glared the announcement: " Under New Management."

Paul Olinorf walked steadily to the end of the street, and there stopped. Though it was only four o'clock in the afternoon the street lamps were already alight and glimmered through the black drizzle like bright eyes blinded with tears. (At least, that was the simile that occurred to him.) Also it was the last day in the year—a melancholy occasion, especially to exiles who have succeeded in quarrelling with everything, including their principles and their bread and butter—so that Olinorf's sensation of almost suicidal depression was not surprising.

Slowly Paul Olinorf turned and walked back.

Shiftless, but rather charming, there had been something quite winning about the old Grand-Duchess. As a fat, round-faced peasant woman, Olinorf might have found it in his heart to love her. Even the Grand-Duke had a sort of likeableness. As to their daughter——

Paul Olinorf stopped again. Whoever they were the new management was making a big effort. Through a chink in the curtains he could see the gaily-decorated tables and a cleared space with two violin-stands and an upright piano. Russian music. The new management knew how to do things. No doubt they had bought out the old firm cheap. The Grand-Duke wouldn't even know how to make a bargain.

What happened to Grand-Dukes and Duchesses who were ruined? For all his passionate beliefs his imagination couldn't really see them starving and suffering like ordinary people. The old superstitions clung. They were fairy-tale people, different and invulnerable.

And yet when he had walked with her in the fog she had seemed just a lovable and charming girl who knew home-sickness and loneliness like himself.

Suddenly he knew why he was so heavy-hearted.

He pushed open the swing-doors. At least the new management could tell him where they had gone. And even if they were only relatively well off and happy he wouldn't care—he wouldn't give her another thought.

But the swing-doors had been like a barrier that had separated him from an illusion. Once they closed behind him the picture of successful enterprise fell to pieces. and he knew at once that he was once again in the presence of disaster. It shouted at him. It shouted in Russian, and the prettily decorated tables seemed to quail under its violence. The dainty menus on their stands shivered like leaves in a rising tempest. Except for the noise the restaurant was empty.

"We Russians"—Olinorf thought—"shout too much."

And he tinkled a brass hand-bell furiously.

The next instant the curtains across the opposite doors parted and there was the Grand-Duchess Anna Maria herself.

They stared at one another. They were both too startled to pretend successfully. Their faces were scarlet.

She spoke at last with as much glacial dignity as is possible to anyone who has to speak at the top of her voice.

"The restaurant is closed. We are not opening till to-night. Please go away."

"In the first place," Olinorf said, "the restaurant is not closed. The doors were open——"

"They ought not to have been——"

"That is not my fault——"

"In any case we are not serving."

"I don't want to be served. I came here because I thought the place was under new management——"

"Oh!" For some reason his explanation seemed to increase her indignation against him. She snapped the curtain to behind her in a futile attempt to close out the tumult, and considered him proudly. "Well—I am the new management," she said.

He made her a little bow.

"I wish your Imperial Highness every success——"

"And I am not an Imperial Highness. My name is Miss Anna Maria Andrews. And as all our tables are engaged, I should be very grateful——"

"I shall go when I have said what I came to say."

"You didn't come here to say anything to me. You thought we'd gone——"

"I came to find out where you'd gone——"

"There's nothing you can say——"

"Yes, there is." He took a step nearer to her. "Mademoiselle, I have to tell you that I am a liar——"

"Oh——!"

"I told you that I lent your people that money to humiliate you. It wasn't true. I did it because—I wanted to help. But you had laughed at my loving you——"

"I didn't laugh——"

"I wanted to tell you that I am sorry—sorry for everything—most of all for our hatred of one another. I want to tell you that I shall never hate anyone again——"

The angry blood was drying from her cheeks. He saw how wan and tired she was.

"Monsieur, I have been thinking of your poor grandfather. I have seen him every night in my dreams——"

"As I have been seeing you—in that rat-infested prison——"

"Perhaps—here—on neutral ground—we might forgive one another——"

"That is why I came—to be forgiven——"

They were both trembling a little. They

were like people on the verge of some tremendous happening.

"Monsieur—I didn't laugh because you loved me——"

"It was presumptuous—you had the right——"

"Not any more——"

"You don't know who I am——"

"An enemy—a spy——"

"Not that—not now. I couldn't—loving you. I've quarrelled with them. I'd paid your debts with their propaganda money, and they've turned me out as a traitor. I'll never see Russia any more——"

"Why, then — we're friends — fellow-exiles——"

He saw the light that came into her face and shook his head sorrowfully.

"Mademoiselle—you don't remember—"

"Only that you helped us——"

"Further back——" he stammered and broke off. "If only I could help again——"

But she had no chance to answer. There was a deafening crash of crockery.

"It's Peter——"

"Drunk——?"

"Giving notice. To-night was our last hope. And he's going—he says we're Bolsheviks——"

"In heaven's name—I don't understand—is he crazy, too?"

Peter Imovitch answered for himself. His giant form lurched through the curtains. He was splendidly drunk and overwhelmingly solemn. A holy indignation shone out of his round, scarlet face.

Peter Imovitch untied his white apron.

"I have served the Tsar," he thundered. "I have cooked for kings. I have followed my Imperial masters into a wretched country where a man can neither eat nor drink as a man should. But you—you who have so shamefully abandoned the titles and privileges of your blood—you are no longer worthy of me——"

And he threw his cap and apron in the Grand Duke's face.

With his going a deafening silence fell on the little restaurant. At sight of Paul Olinorf the Grand-Duke had recovered his composure. Considering how small he was and how old and broken, he spoke with an amazing and gentle dignity.

"Monsieur, my daughter tells me that we are enemies. Our people have wronged one another and trampled on one another as their turn came. It is your turn now. You see us at the end of hope. Be satisfied——"

But Paul Olinorf did not answer. He had picked up the apron and was tying it about his waist.

"When do you expect your guests?"

"At eight——"

"We have still two hours, then—enough." He set the discarded cap on his dark head. "I am out of a job, sir. I ask to be reinstated in your service——"

"Monsieur——?"

He drew himself up. He could not look at her. His face was white as his cap and frozen with resolution.

"You have forgotten," he said. "Perhaps you never knew. But in your palace at St. Petersburg I used to be your second cook——"

Two hours was little enough time to prepare a five-course dinner with a kitchen in which outraged genius had wrought its worst. But somehow it was done. They worked together. He gave his orders and she obeyed them. Every now and then she remembered that she had been a Grand-Duchess, but it all seemed very far off and unreal.

They rarely spoke. At first they dared not look at one another. Then their glances touched shyly and fled. But next time they smiled and held each other fast.

The guests came. The little restaurant filled and grew warm with voices and the clatter of plates and the scraping of violin and 'cello. Katrina and Feodora worked with Slavonic passion, and every now and then the Grand-Duke peeped through the curtains, smiling and nodding.

"It is well, my children. Never was there such cooking. We are saved——"

At midnight the tired little band played "For Auld Lang Syne" for the English and a sad Russian song, and Paul and Anna Maria, who were alone, stood still in the stifling kitchen and listened. And perhaps because their spirits were visiting a land their eyes would never see again they took hands like children.

"After all, one's home is anywhere——" she whispered.

"Where one loves," he added.

She stood on tip-toe to kiss him.

"Take care of us, Paul——"

And then, because there were people in "The Jolly Russian" who insisted they were still hungry, they went on working.

The Procurator of Judæa

"Memory is not so brilliant as hope"

By ANATOLE FRANCE

(Translated by the late Frederic Chapman)

Anatole France, well called "the master," is here represented for the first time in the *Argosy* by a story which for graceful irony is probably without equal in any language. Born over a poor Parisian bookseller's shop, France spent his early years among books; and before he died in 1926 was universally renowned as thinker, savant and exquisite stylist.

LÆLIUS LAMIA, born in Italy of illustrious parents, had not yet discarded the *toga prætexta* when he set out for the schools of Athens to study philosophy. Subsequently he took up his residence at Rome, and in his house on the Esquiline, amid a circle of youthful wastrels, abandoned himself to licentious courses. But being accused of engaging in criminal relations with Lepida, the wife of Sulpicius Quirinus, a man of consular rank, and being found guilty, he was exiled by Tiberius Cæsar. At that time he was just entering his twenty-fourth year. During the eighteen years that his exile lasted he traversed Syria, Palestine, Cappadocia, and Armenia, and made prolonged visits to Antioch, Cæsarea, and Jerusalem. When, after the death of Tiberius, Caius was raised to the purple, Lamia obtained permission to return to Rome. He even regained a portion of his possessions. Adversity had taught him wisdom.

He avoided all intercourse with the wives and daughters of Roman citizens, made no efforts towards obtaining office, held aloof from public honours, and lived a secluded life in his house on the Esquiline. Occupying himself with the task of recording all the remarkable things he had seen during his distant travels, he turned, as he said, the vicissitudes of his years of expiation into a diversion for his hours of rest. In the midst of these calm employments, alternating with assiduous study of the works of Epicurus, he recognised with a mixture of surprise and vexation that age was stealing upon him. In his sixty-second year, being afflicted with an illness which proved in no slight degree troublesome, he decided to have recourse to the waters at Baiæ. The coast at that point, once frequented by the halcyon, was at this date the resort of the wealthy Roman, greedy of pleasure. For a week Lamia lived alone, without a friend in the brilliant crowd. Then one day, after dinner, an inclination to which he yielded urged him to ascend the incline, which, covered with vines that resembled bacchantes, looked out upon the waves.

Having reached the summit he seated himself by the side of a path beneath a terebinth, and let his glances wander over the lovely landscape. To his left, livid and bare, the Phlegræan plain stretched out towards the ruins of Cumæ. On his right, Cape Misenum, plunged its abrupt spur beneath the Tyrrhenian sea. Beneath his feet luxurious Baiæ, following the graceful outline of the coast, displayed its gardens, its villas thronged with statues, its porticos, its marble terraces along the shores of the blue ocean where the dolphins sported. Before him, on the other side of the bay, on the Campanian coast, gilded by the already sinking sun, gleamed the temples which far away rose above the laurels of Posilippo, whilst on the extreme horizon Vesuvius looked forth smiling.

Lamia drew from a fold of his toga a scroll containing the *Treatise upon Nature*, extended himself upon the ground, and began to read. But the warning cries of a slave necessitated his rising to allow of the passage of a litter which was being carried along the narrow pathway through the vineyards. The litter being uncurtained, permitted Lamia to see stretched upon the cushions as it was borne nearer to him the figure of an elderly man of immense bulk, who, supporting his head on his hand, gazed out with a gloomy and disdainful expression. His nose, which was aquiline, and his chin, which was prominent, seemed desirous of meeting across his lips, and his jaws were powerful.

From the first moment Lamia was convinced that the face was familiar to him. He hesitated a moment before the name came to him. Then suddenly hastening towards the litter with a display of surprise and delight—

"Pontius Pilate!" he cried. "The gods be praised who have permitted me to see you once again!"

The old man gave a signal to the slaves to stop, and cast a keen glance upon the stranger who had addressed him.

"Pontius, my dear host," resumed the latter, "have twenty years so far whitened my hair and hollowed my cheeks that you no longer recognise your friend Ælius Lamia?"

At this name Pontius Pilate dismounted from the litter as actively as the weight of his years and the heaviness of his gait permitted him, and embraced Ælius Lamia again and again.

"Gods! what a treat it is to me to see you once more! But, alas, you call up memories of those long-vanished days when I was Procurator of Judæa in the province of Syria. Why, it must be thirty years ago that I first met you. It was at Cæsarea, whither you came to drag out your weary term of exile. I was fortunate enough to alleviate it a little, and out of friendship, Lamia, you followed me to that depressing place Jerusalem, where the Jews filled me with bitterness and disgust. You remained for more than ten years my guest and my companion, and in converse about Rome and things Roman we both of us managed to find consolation—you for your misfortunes, and I for my burdens of State."

Lamia embraced him afresh.

"You forget two things, Pontius; you are overlooking the facts that you used your influence on my behalf with Herod Antipas, and that your purse was freely open to me."

"Let us not talk of that," replied Pontius, "since after your return to Rome you sent me by one of your freedmen a sum of money which repaid me with usury."

"Pontius, I could never consider myself out of your debt by the mere payment of money. But tell me, have the gods fulfilled your desires? Are you in the enjoyment of all the happiness you deserve? Tell me about your family, your fortunes, your health."

"I have withdrawn to Sicily, where I possess estates, and where I cultivate wheat for the market. My eldest daughter, my best-beloved Pontia, who has been left a widow, lives with me, and directs my household. The gods be praised, I have preserved my mental vigour; my memory is not in the least degree enfeebled. But old age always brings in its train a long procession of griefs and infirmities. I am cruelly tormented with gout. And at this very moment you find me on my way to the Phlegræan plain in search of a remedy for my sufferings. From that burning soil, whence at night flames burst forth, proceed acrid exhalations of sulphur, which, so they say, ease the pains and restore suppleness to the stiffened joints. At least, the physicians assure me that it is so."

"May you find it so in your case, Pontius! But, despite the gout and its burning torments, you scarcely look as old as myself, although in reality you must be my senior by ten years. Unmistakably you have retained a greater degree of vigour than I ever possessed, and I am overjoyed to find you looking so hale. Why, dear friend, did you retire from the public service before the customary age? Why, on resigning your governorship in Judæa, did you withdraw to a voluntary exile on your Sicilian estates? Give me an account of your doings from the moment that I ceased to be a witness of them. You were preparing to suppress a Samaritan rising when I set out for Cappadocia, where I hoped to draw some profit from the breeding of horses and mules. I have not seen you since then. How did that expedition succeed? Pray tell me. Everything interests me that concerns you in any way."

Pontius Pilate sadly shook his head.

"My natural disposition," he said, "as well as a sense of duty, impelled me to fulfil my public responsibilities, not merely with diligence, but even with ardour. But I was pursued by unrelenting hatred. Intrigues and calumnies cut short my career in its prime, and the fruit it should have looked to bear has withered away. You ask me about the Samaritan insurrection. Let us sit down on this hillock. I shall be able to give you an answer in few words. Those occurrences are as vividly present to me as if they had happened yesterday.

"A man of the people, of persuasive speech—there are many such to be met with in Syria—induced the Samaritans to gather together in arms on Mount Gerizim (which in that country is looked upon as a holy

place) under the promise that he would disclose to their sight the sacred vessels which in the ancient days of Evander and our father, Æneas, had been hidden away by an eponymous hero, or rather a tribal deity, named Moses. Upon this assurance the Samaritans rose in rebellion; but having been warned in time to forestall them, I dispatched detachments of infantry to occupy the mountain, and stationed cavalry to keep the approaches to it under observation.

"These measures of prudence were urgent. The rebels were already laying siege to the town of Tyrathaba, situated at the foot of Mount Gerizim. I easily dispersed them, and stifled the as yet scarcely organised revolt. Then, in order to give a forcible example with as few victims as possible, I handed over to execution the leaders of the rebellion. But you are aware, Lamia, in what strait dependence I was kept by the proconsul Vitellius, who governed Syria not in, but against the interests of Rome, and looked upon the provinces of the empire as territories which could be farmed out to tetrarchs. The head-men among the Samaritans, in their resentment against me, came and fell at his feet lamenting. To listen to them, nothing had been further from their thoughts than to disobey Cæsar. It was I who had provoked the rising, and it was purely in order to withstand my violence that they had gathered together round Tyrathaba. Vitellius listened to their complaints, and handing over the affairs of Judæa to his friend Marcellus, commanded me to go and justify my proceedings before the Emperor himself.

With a heart overflowing with grief and resentment I took ship. Just as I approached the shores of Italy, Tiberius, worn out with age and the cares of empire, died suddenly on the selfsame Cape Misenum, whose peak we see from this very spot magnified in the mists of evening. I demanded justice of Caius, his successor, whose perception was naturally acute, and who was acquainted with Syrian affairs. But marvel with me, Lamia, at the maliciousness of fortune, resolved on my discomfiture. Caius then had in his suite at Rome the Jew Agrippa, his companion, the friend of his childhood, whom he cherished as his own eyes. Now Agrippa favoured Vitellius, inasmuch as Vitellius was the enemy of Antipas, whom Agrippa pursued with his hatred. The Emperor adopted the prejudices of his beloved Asiatic, and refused even to listen to me. There was nothing for me to do but bow beneath the stroke of unmerited misfortune. With tears for my meat and gall for my portion, I withdrew to my estates in Sicily, where I should have died of grief if my sweet Pontia had not come to console her father. I have cultivated wheat, and succeeded in producing the fullest ears in the whole province. But now my life is ended; the future will judge between Vitellius and me."

"Pontius," replied Lamia, "I am persuaded that you acted towards the Samaritans according to the rectitude of your character, and solely in the interests of Rome. But were you not perchance on that occasion a trifle too much influenced by that impetuous courage which has always swayed you? You will remember that in Judæa it often happened that I who, younger than you, should naturally have been more impetuous than you, was obliged to urge you to clemency and suavity."

"Suavity towards the Jews!" cried Pontius Pilate. "Although you have lived amongst them, it seems clear that you ill understand those enemies of the human race. Haughty and at the same time base, combining an invincible obstinacy with a despicably mean spirit, they weary alike your love and your hatred. My character, Lamia, was formed upon the maxims of the divine Augustus. When I was appointed Procurator of Judæa, the world was already penetrated with the majestic ideal of the *pax romana*. No longer, as in the days of our internecine strife, were we witnesses to the sack of a province for the aggrandisement of a proconsul. I knew where my duty lay. I was careful that my actions should be governed by prudence and moderation. The gods are my witnesses that I was resolved upon mildness, and upon mildness only. Yet what did my benevolent intentions avail me? You were at my side, Lamia, when, at the outset of my career as ruler, the first rebellion came to a head. Is there any need for me to recall the details to you? The garrison had been transferred from Cæsarea to take up its winter quarters at Jerusalem. Upon the ensigns of the legionaries appeared the presentment of Cæsar. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, who did not recognise the indwelling divinity of the Emperor, were scandalised at this, as

though, when obedience is compulsory, it were not less abject to obey a god than a man. The priests of their nation appeared before my tribunal imploring me with supercilious humility to have the ensigns removed from within the holy city. Out of reverence for the divine nature of Cæsar and the majesty of the empire, I refused to comply. Then the rabble made common cause with the priests, and all around the pretorium portentous cries of supplication arose. I ordered the soldiers to stack their spears in front of the tower of Antonia, and to proceed, armed only with sticks like lictors, to disperse the insolent crowd. But, heedless of blows, the Jews continued their entreaties, and the more obstinate amongst them threw themselves on the ground and, exposing their throats to the rods, deliberately courted death. You were a witness of my humiliation on that occasion, Lamia. By the order of Vitellius I was forced to send the insignia back to Cæsarea. That disgrace I had certainly not merited. Before the immortal gods I swear that never once during my term of office did I flout justice and the laws. But I am grown old. My enemies and detractors are dead. I shall die unavenged. Who will now retrieve my character ? "

He moaned and lapsed into silence. Lamia replied—

" That man is prudent who neither hopes nor fears anything from the uncertain events of the future. Does it matter in the least what estimate men may form of us hereafter ? We ourselves are after all our own witnesses, and our own judges. You must rely, Pontius Pilate, on the testimony you yourself bear to your own rectitude. Be content with your own personal respect and that of your friends. For the rest, we know that mildness by itself will not suffice for the work of government. There is but little room in the actions of public men for that indulgence of human frailty which the philosophers recommend."

" We'll say no more at present," said Pontius. " The sulphureous fumes which rise from the Phlegræan plain are more powerful when the ground which exhales them is still warm beneath the sun's rays. I must hasten on. Adieu ! But now that I have rediscovered a friend, I should wish to take advantage of my good fortune. Do me the favour, Ælius Lamia, to give me your company at supper at my house to-morrow. My house stands on the seashore, at the extreme end of the town in the direction of Misenum. You will easily recognise it by the porch which bears a painting representing Orpheus surrounded by tigers and lions, whom he is charming with the strains from his lyre.

" Till to-morrow, Lamia," he repeated, as he climbed once more into his litter. " To-morrow we will talk about Judæa."

¶

THE following day at the supper hour Lamia presented himself at the house of Pontius Pilate. Two couches only were in readiness for occupants. Creditably but simply equipped, the table held a silver service in which were set out beccaficos in honey, thrushes, oysters from the Lucrine lake, and lampreys from Sicily. As they proceeded with their repast, Pontius and Lamia interchanged inquiries with one another about their ailments, the symptoms of which they described at considerable length, mutually emulous of communicating the various remedies which had been recommended to them. Then, congratulating themselves on being thrown together once more at Baiæ, they vied with one another in praise of the beauty of that enchanting coast and the mildness of the climate they enjoyed. Lamia was enthusiastic about the charms of the courtesans who frequented the seashore laden with golden ornaments and trailing draperies of barbaric broidery. But the aged Procurator deplored the ostentation with which by means of trumpery jewels and filmy garments foreigners and even enemies of the empire beguiled the Romans of their gold. After a time they turned to the subject of the great engineering feats that had been accomplished in the country ; the prodigious bridge constructed by Caius between Puteoli and Baiæ, and the canals which Augustus excavated to convey the waters of the ocean to Lake Avernus and the Lucrine lake.

" I also," said Pontius, with a sigh, " I also wished to set afoot public works of great utility. When, for my sins, I was appointed Governor of Judæa, I conceived the idea of furnishing Jerusalem with an abundant supply of pure water by means of an aqueduct. The elevation of the levels, the proportionate capacity of the various parts, the gradient for the brazen reservoirs to which the distribution pipes were to be

fixed—I had gone into every detail, and decided everything for myself with the assistance of mechanical experts. I had drawn up regulations for the superintendents so as to prevent individuals from making unauthorised depredations. The architects and the workmen had their instructions. I gave orders for the commencement of operations. But far from viewing with satisfaction the construction of that conduit, which was intended to carry to their town upon its massive arches not only water but health, the inhabitants of Jerusalem gave vent to lamentable outcries. They gathered tumultuously together, exclaiming against the sacrilege and impiousness, and, hurling themselves upon the workmen, scattered the very foundation stones. Can you picture to yourself, Lamia, a filthier set of barbarians? Nevertheless, Vitellius decided in their favour, and I received orders to put a stop to the work."

"It is a knotty point," said Lamia, "how far one is justified in devising things for the commonweal against the will of the populace."

Pontius Pilate continued as though he had not heard this interruption.

"Refuse an aqueduct! What madness! But whatever is of Roman origin is distasteful to the Jews. In their eyes we are an unclean race, and our very presence appears a profanation to them. You will remember that they would never venture to enter the pretorium for fear of defiling themselves, and that I was consequently obliged to discharge my magisterial functions in an open-air tribunal on that marble pavement your feet so often trod.

"They fear us and they despise us. Yet is not Rome the mother and warden of all those peoples who nestle smiling upon her venerable bosom? With her eagles in the van, peace and liberty have been carried to the very confines of the universe. Those whom we have subdued we look on as our friends, and we leave those conquered races, nay, we secure to them the permanence of their customs and their laws. Did Syria, aforetime rent asunder by its rabble of petty kings, ever even begin to taste of peace and prosperity until it submitted to the armies of Pompey? And when Rome might have reaped a golden harvest as the price of her goodwill, did she lay hands on the hoards that swell the treasuries of barbaric temples? Did she despoil the shrine of Cybele at Pessinus, or the Morimene and Cilician sanctuaries of Jupiter, or the temple of the Jewish god at Jerusalem? Antioch, Palmyra, and Apamea, secure despite their wealth, and no longer in dread of the wandering Arab of the desert, have erected temples to the genius of Rome and the divine Cæsar. The Jews alone hate and withstand us. They withhold their tribute till it is wrested from them, and obstinately rebel against military service."

"The Jews," replied Lamia, "are profoundly attached to their ancient customs. They suspected you, unreasonably I admit, of a desire to abolish their laws and change their usages. Do not resent it, Pontius, if I say that you did not always act in such a way as to disperse their unfortunate illusion. It gratified you, despite your habitual self-restraint, to play upon their fears, and more than once have I seen you betray in their presence the contempt with which their beliefs and religious ceremonies inspired you. You irritated them particularly by giving instructions for the sacerdotal garments and ornaments of their high priest to be kept in ward by your legionaries in the Antonine tower. One must admit that though they have never risen like us to an appreciation of things divine, the Jews celebrate rites which their very antiquity renders venerable."

Pontius Pilate shrugged his shoulders.

"They have very little exact knowledge of the nature of the gods," he said. "They worship Jupiter, yet they abstain from naming him or erecting a statue of him. They do not even adore him under the semblance of a rude stone, as certain of the Asiatic peoples are wont to do. They know nothing of Apollo, of Neptune, of Mars, nor of Pluto, nor of any goddess. At the same time, I am convinced that in days gone by they worshipped Venus. For even to this day their women bring doves to the altar as victims; and you know as well as I that the dealers who trade beneath the arcades of their temple supply those birds in couples for sacrifice. I have even been told that on one occasion some madman proceeded to overturn the stalls bearing these offerings, and their owners with them. The priests raised an outcry about it, and looked on it as a case of sacrilege. I am of opinion that their custom of sacrificing turtle-doves was instituted in honour of Venus. Why are you laughing, Lamia?"

"I was laughing," said Lamia, "at an amusing idea which, I hardly know how,

just occurred to me. I was thinking that perchance some day the Jupiter of the Jews might come to Rome and vent his fury upon you. Why should he not? Asia and Africa have already enriched us with a considerable number of gods. We have seen temples in honour of Isis and the dog-faced Anubis erected in Rome. In the public squares, and even on the race-courses, you may run across the Bona Dea of the Syrians mounted on an ass. And did you never hear how, in the reign of Tiberius, a young patrician passed himself off as the horned Jupiter of the Egyptians, Jupiter Ammon, and in this disguise procured the favours of an illustrious lady who was too virtuous to deny anything to a god? Beware, Pontius, lest the invisible Jupiter of the Jews disembark some day on the quay at Ostia!"

At the idea of a god coming out of Judæa, a fleeting smile played over the severe countenance of the Procurator. Then he replied gravely—

"How would the Jews manage to impose their sacred law on outside peoples when they are in a perpetual state of tumult amongst themselves as to the interpretation of that law? You have seen them yourself, Lamia, in the public squares, split up into twenty rival parties, with staves in their hands, abusing each other and clutching one another by the beard. You have seen them on the steps of the temple, tearing their filthy garments as a symbol of lamentation, with some wretched creature in a frenzy of prophetic exaltation in their midst. They have never realised that it is possible to discuss peacefully and with an even mind those matters concerning the divine which yet are hidden from the profane and wrapped in uncertainty. For the nature of the immortal gods remains hidden from us, and we cannot arrive at a knowledge of it. Though I am of opinion, none the less, that it is a prudent thing to believe in the providence of the gods. But the Jews are devoid of philosophy, and cannot tolerate any diversity of opinions. On the contrary, they judge worthy of the extreme penalty all those who on divine subjects profess opinions opposed to their law. And as, since the genius of Rome has towered over them, capital sentences pronounced by their own tribunals can only be carried out with the sanction of the proconsul or the procurator, they harry the Roman magistrate at any hour to procure his signature to their baleful decrees, they besiege the pretorium with their cries of 'Death!' A hundred times, at least, have I known them, mustered, rich and poor together, all united under their priests, make a furious onslaught on my ivory chair, seizing me by the skirts of my robe, by the thongs of my sandals, and all to demand of me—nay, to exact from me—the death sentence on some unfortunate whose guilt I failed to perceive, and as to whom I could only pronounce that he was as mad as his accusers. A hundred times, do I say! Not a hundred, but every day and all day. Yet it was my duty to execute their law as if it were ours, since I was appointed by Rome not for the destruction, but for the upholding of their customs, and over them I had the power of the rod and the axe. At the outset of my term of office I endeavoured to persuade them to hear reason; I attempted to snatch their miserable victims from death. But this show of mildness only irritated them the more; they demanded their prey, fighting around me like a horde of vultures with wing and beak. Their priests reported to Cæsar that I was violating their law, and their appeals, supported by Vitellius, drew down upon me a severe reprimand. How many times did I long, as the Greeks used to say, to dispatch accusers and accused in one convoy to the crows!

"Do not imagine, Lamia, that I nourish the rancour of the discomfited, the wrath of the superannuated, against a people which in my person has prevailed against both Rome and tranquillity. But I foresee the extremity to which sooner or later they will reduce us. Since we cannot govern them, we shall be driven to destroy them. Never doubt it. Always in a state of insubordination, brewing rebellion in their inflammatory minds, they will one day burst forth upon us with a fury beside which the wrath of the Numidians and the mutterings of the Parthians are mere child's play. They are secretly nourishing preposterous hopes, and madly premeditating our ruin. How can it be otherwise, when, on the strength of an oracle, they are living in expectation of the coming of a prince of their own blood whose kingdom shall extend over the whole earth? There are no half measures with such a people. They must be exterminated. Jerusalem must be laid waste to the very foundation. Perchance, old as I am, it may be granted me to behold the day when her walls shall fall and the flames shall envelop her houses, when her

inhabitants shall pass under the edge of the sword, when salt shall be strown on the place where once the temple stood. And in that day I shall at length be justified."

Lamia exerted himself to lead the conversation back to a less acrimonious note.

"Pontius," he said, "it is not difficult for me to understand both your long-standing resentment and your sinister forebodings. Truly, what you have experienced of the character of the Jews is nothing to their advantage. But I lived in Jerusalem as an interested onlooker, and mingled freely with the people, and I succeeded in detecting certain obscure virtues in these rude folk which were altogether hidden from you. I have met Jews who were all mildness, whose simple manners and faithfulness of heart recalled to me what our poets have related concerning the Spartan lawgiver. And you yourself, Pontius, have seen perish beneath the cudgels of your legionaries simple-minded men who have died for a cause they believed to be just without revealing their names. Such men do not deserve our contempt. I am saying this because it is desirable in all things to preserve moderation and an even mind. But I own that I never experienced any lively sympathy for the Jews. The Jewesses, on the contrary, I found extremely pleasing. I was young then, and the Syrian women stirred all my senses to response. Their ruddy lips, their liquid eyes that shone in the shade, their sleepy gaze pierced me to the very marrow. Painted and stained, smelling of nard and myrrh, steeped in odours, their physical attractions are both rare and delightful."

Pontius listened impatiently to these praises.

"I was not the kind of man to fall into the snares of the Jewish women," he said; "and since you have opened the subject yourself, Lamia, I was never able to approve of your laxity. If I did not express with sufficient emphasis formerly how culpable I held you for having intrigued at Rome with the wife of a man of consular rank, it was because you were then enduring heavy penance for your misdoings. Marriage from the patrician point of view is a sacred tie; it is one of the institutions which are the support of Rome. As to foreign women and slaves, such relations as one may enter into with them would be of little account were it not that they habituate the body to a humiliating effeminacy. Let me tell you that you have been too liberal in your offerings to the Venus of the Market-place; and what, above all, I blame in you is that you have not married in compliance with the law and given children to the Republic, as every good citizen is bound to do."

But the man who had suffered exile under Tiberius was no longer listening to the venerable magistrate. Having tossed off his cup of Falernian, he was smiling at some image visible to his eye alone.

After a moment's silence he resumed in a very deep voice, which rose in pitch by little and little—

"With what languorous grace they dance, those Syrian women! I knew a Jewess at Jerusalem who used to dance in a poky little room, on a threadbare carpet, by the light of one smoky little lamp, waving her arms as she clanged her cymbals. Her loins arched, her head thrown back, and, as it were, dragged down by the weight of her heavy red hair, her eyes swimming with voluptuousness, e a g e r, l a n g u i s h i n g, compliant, she would have made Cleopatra herself grow pale with envy. I was in love with her barbaric dances, her voice—a little raucous and yet so sweet—her atmosphere of incense, the semi-somnolescent state in which she seemed to live. I followed her everywhere. I mixed with the vile rabble of soldiers, conjurers, and extortioners with which she was surrounded. One day, however, she disappeared, and I saw her no more. Long did I seek her in disreputable alleys and taverns. It was more difficult to learn to do without her than to lose the taste for Greek wine. Some months after I lost sight of her, I learned by chance that she had attached herself to a small company of men and women who were followers of a young Galilean thaumaturgist. His name was Jesus; he came from Nazareth, and he was crucified for some crime, I don't quite know what. Pontius, do you remember anything about the man?"

Pontius Pilate contracted his brows, and his hand rose to his forehead in the attitude of one who probes the deeps of memory. Then after a silence of some seconds—

"Jesus?" he murmured, "Jesus—of Nazareth? I cannot call him to mind."

The Empty Chair

Some failures are grander than success

By STEPHEN BOND

"BOYS, we will say grace," said the Dean.

The six big men, who were the Dean's guests that night, stood to attention at the back of their chairs, with a refreshing sense of shyness.

The familiar surroundings of the Dean's dining-room seemed to give them back their boyhood again.

That morning, Seaton, the butler, had asked the cook who the Dean's "specials" were. Cook, who had been with the Dean for thirty years, had sniffed ominously at such ignorance.

"They're celebrities," she announced briefly.

"Yes, but who are they?" insisted the inquiring Seaton.

"The Dean was clergyman once," said cook, "before he was a Dean, and he was headmaster of a well-known public school, and these coming to-night was boys who was above the fifth form and wasn't in the sixth; but was 'specials,' the cleverest boys in the school. And a nice life them dear boys led me," continued the cook. "When they left, they give the Dean a dessert service, and he give them ten years to make their names in; then he said they should all come to dinner with him, and they're coming here to-night," concluded the cook triumphantly.

The Dean, as he faced the men before him on this auspicious evening, realised that success had set its seal upon them.

Then the beautifully-laid dinner table, with its shaded candles, faded from before the old Dean's eyes, and with it every thought of the world or its ambition.

A distinguished company they looked, as each man took his appointed seat. A young cavalry officer sat at the Dean's right hand. On the left of him was a rising barrister, while the editor and proprietor of a well-known London daily paper faced the only other ecclesiastic present save the Dean. Then in order came a rising M.P., and opposite him a novelist, who had just sprung into fame. A vacant seat faced the Dean at the foot of the table.

"I expected one other," said the Dean, "as you all see by the empty chair, but I fear he is unable to come. And, by the way," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "I see I have committed a grievous blunder in placing Jack Carlton, Conservative Member for Hampshire, beside Grant, proprietor of a well-known Liberal organ. I do hope," added the Dean, "it will not end in blows."

"Or," suggested the M.P., laughingly, "an action for slander."

"If I only thought it would," chimed in Trenham, the barrister, "I'd hold a watching brief."

A general laugh followed this sally.

"Do you remember the evening, sir, years ago," asked the young Vicar, "when we all bunked evening prep., and you found us singing carols for money?"

"Yes," said the Dean, "I'm afraid you all did many reprehensible things in those days, which sometimes caused me to be very ashamed of you."

"Yes, Ted," chimed in Grant, the editor, "and I remember you got whacked twice as much as any of us, for saying that you were not singing."

The Dean nodded.

"Which was perfectly true," insisted the young Reverend, with a broad grin. "It has always been the one regret of my life. I have never been able to sing a note, but I certainly joined in the fun that night."

"And shared the oof," said the M.P.

"And trumped up a paltry defence at the trial," added the barrister.

"And suffered the sentence," ended the Dean, quietly. "I think he sang out that time, at any rate."

"Bravo, sir," chorused the others.

"The Dean's got you there, Master Ted."

"Yes," replied Master Ted; "I still

repeat that was the first time that evening that I sang."

"Answer me this—" said the barrister.

"Now for a leading question, and beware of trifling with the law," croaked the M.P. in anticipation of a coming debate.

"Who sings the hymns in your new church?" continued the counsel remorselessly.

"The choir," innocently replied the reverend witness.

"Have you never assisted them—say, started them?"

"Yes, once."

"You own then," persisted the counsel, laying his fish knife down with the air of a man who brings a fact home beyond dispute, "that you assisted the choir, technically, assisted them in harmony?"

"That was my harmless intention, but the result was the most appalling discord ever heard inside my church," he concluded amid a perfect yell from his old school-fellows.

The Dean chuckled to hear the old cut and thrust; the dinner was really going well.

"I suppose," remarked the editor graciously to the novelist, "your limited time always enables you sufficient leisure to read your own books?"

"Oh, dear, no," rejoined the novelist, without moving a muscle; "the public save me that trouble. I only have to write them."

"It would come to blows," laughed the Dean. "I said it would."

"There was one man," the barrister broke in with, "one man I used to think would do better than any of us. What a sparkling and brilliant wit he had; how clever he was."

"You mean Denny Bickton," said the Dean.

"Yes," replied the barrister.

"What chums we were, do you remember?" said the editor.

"Yes," said the Dean.

"I can't think what has become of him," the editor went on; "I thought I saw him in Cheapside to-day, but of course it couldn't have been; very like him though, but awfully thin and shabby, all doubled up. I nearly spoke to him by mistake. Surely one we all thought would have been the best of the 'specials' can't have been a failure?"

A shadow seemed to cross the old Dean's face.

"Yes," the Dean spoke quietly, "I fear he has been a failure."

"Yes," chorused the others, "that's about it—a failure."

Then there was a pause.

"We do not know the reason," said the Dean. "We must not judge him."

"No," said the editor. "But, oh, what a pity, what a pity!"

"Had he done well he would be there," and the Dean pointed to the vacant seat facing him.

Their eyes followed the direction of his hand; somehow that empty seat seemed to make them feel uncomfortable for the first time.

"My dear boys," continued the Dean, "as you all know, I have tried in the years gone by to help you all to be what you are now, honourable Englishmen, attaining great positions in the world, raising yourselves, serving your country, aye, and God as well, and I tell you frankly, the one I thought would do such great things, has, I fear, done the least. He was my favourite pupil, and that is saying much. I expected so much of him, we all did, and yet——"

"Yes," said the editor, "I did; we were worn pals, Denny and I."

"He went to Oxford, Magdalen, and left suddenly. I have not heard of him since," concluded the Dean.

¶

THE dessert was laid, the servant withdrew, the old boys pushed aside the delicate finger glasses a little absently; they were thinking of their old schoolfellow, perhaps.

"You recognise the dessert service?" said the Dean.

"Yes," said the M.P. "I remember also the fight we had over the choosing of it; we——"

"It was Bickton," interrupted the editor, "who silenced all disputes. He had the most money and headed the procession into the city shop. 'Worthy Alderman,' he exclaimed, addressing old Sir John Lenton, 'we want to inspect your wares in order to purchase something to eat off as a present.' Sir John stared. 'Should we purchase plate,' continued Bickton, 'it will undoubtedly "bless him that gives and him that takes," as Shakespeare says, because we shall inevitably be asked to dinner.'"

The Dean smiled. "How like him," he said.

"'So,' quoth Bickton, 'good Sir John.

show us of your quality. Something that would grace a City Company's princely feed, and yet not cripple the holiday resources of a hard-working schoolboy. You know the sort of thing which appeals to us. Something in pounds with the guineas graciously withdrawn for cash.'

"'Who is it for?' asked Sir John, when he could get a word in edgeways.

"'For the right reverend parson,' said Bickton solemnly.

"'Oh, is that all," said Sir John, relieved. 'I thought it was for the Archbishop of Canterbury first.'

"'Well,' admitted Bickton, 'there's even hopes he may be that at last.'

"Sir John looked at Denny and said:

"'Some day I should not be surprised if you dined with the Lord Mayor.'

"'That,' replied Denny, 'will be very nice, but it is a matter of speculation; now our dinner off this service will be a dead certainty.'"

"Ah! it should have been," rejoined the Dean, as the editor finished. "Poor Denny, precocious, impudent, clever, and yet withal a failure."

"I am in rather a difficulty," the editor remarked, a few minutes later, "about my new monthly illustrated."

"It's a big scheme," agreed the Dean; "but I think from what I have heard it will be a big success. What is the difficulty you refer to?"

"I want a sub-editor to take almost entire responsibility; the salary is a handsome one, so, of course, hundreds will be in for it. The difficulty lies in the choice of the right man. I suppose you couldn't advise me, sir?"

"I will think it over," said the Dean.

The manservant entered—a gentleman wished to see the Dean.

"What is his name, Seaton?"

"I think he said Bickton, sir."

There was a movement of sudden interest round the table.

"Show him up here," said the Dean.

"The gentleman wished to see you privately, sir; he is not——"

"Is not what?" demanded the Dean.

"Is not in evening dress, sir."

The Dean turned to the others as the servant shut the door.

"How strange to come at such a time. I suppose I must fetch him up myself."

"Yes, sir, we do want to see him. Don't let him go away without seeing us."

"Anyway, he is still alive," said the editor.

The Dean paused at the door.

"If I can persuade him to come up I will," he said.

There was a general buzz when the door closed.

"What an extraordinary time to turn up, when dinner is over," remarked the M.P., lighting a cigar.

"And not dressed!" said the editor; "too bad!"

"Too busy," replied the barrister. "I know what that means."

"Very bad form, anyway," the others all agreed upon that point at least.

"Tell you what," said the M.P., "we'll give him the benefit of one of his own inventions."

"Which?" asked the others.

"The old remedy for fellows who sulked, or would not apologise; surprise party and court-martial."

"Hide in between the bookcases, draw the curtains, spring out on him, and a frog-march up and down the room till he says he's sorry."

"Right you are. Why, it is like the old days."

Six figures disappeared into three niches on either side of the room. The curtains were drawn not a moment too soon, for the door was opened, and the Dean's cheery voice was heard saying:

"My dear boy, why didn't you come up; they're all—" and the Dean then saw the empty room and guessed the old trick. But why didn't they spring out? "They're all—" and the Dean was about to give them away and add "hiding."

"All gone!" said a weak voice.

Surely that wasn't Denny's voice.

They just peeped through the curtains that let out tell-tale little wreaths of tobacco smoke.

Was that Denny? In a ready-made suit of shoddy, worn-out at that, with his hair no longer bright, but streaked with grey, with a lined face and a starved look, yes—positively starved. For the first time, the frog-march didn't take place. Perhaps the same thoughts made the Dean silent. The forlorn-looking creature surveyed the table, bright with the shaded candles, in a dazed way; it seemed dawning upon him that the room was empty, the dinner was over.

He absently raked over a little pile of empty walnut shells and peel, and touched

the rim of one of the old familiar plates. And then, to the Dean's consternation, he sank into one of the empty chairs, bowed his head low over the table, and broke into sobs that shook his sunken frame.

"Denny," said the Dean, "tell me all about it."

¶

THE strange stillness that had fallen on the room only echoed the low sob torn from a broken spirit—a human note that some happier memory sometimes has the power to sound.

"Drink this, my boy," and the Dean poured out a glass of wine.

The other never heeded it.

"I—I—was mad to have come here to-night," he whispered, "but all these long years you have thought me a failure!"

"Never mind that now, my boy," said the Dean.

"And," the tired voice went on, "the others all came to-night in their success, and thought of me as a failure!"

"Yes, they did."

"And so I am—I haven't come to whine, but to tell you the reason."

"Don't if you would rather not."

"Yes, I must tell you.

"When my father died, I was in my second year at Magdalen; he left us very well off. A month later every farthing of our money went in a bank failure!

"I left Oxford at once, and went to Salt & Co.'s office, the paper people, who gave me two pounds ten a week. I've kept them all going at home on that for seven years because I was the only one that could work. They have never known the want of money at home, and can't realise that I can barely keep four besides myself on fifty shillings a week.

"Then I couldn't bear to see little Charlie and Jack growing up without any education, so I began to go without dinners, in order that I could send them to school. And I went without any new clothes so that I could afford to keep the home over us.

"Then Salt & Co. saw by my clothes that I was getting poorer and shabbier every day, so they told me I must either take two pounds a week, or go! How could I? I dare not be out of work, even for a week, with those four depending on me—so I took it."

The Dean was silent, but the anxious look on his face had given place to a look of infinite pity.

The editor behind the curtain swore under his breath that Salt & Co. had received their very last order for paper from him.

"Then," the husky, weakened voice continued, "I made up the ten shillings by going without my meals, until my health gave way.

"Somehow I never realised what I had become. To-day I met Grant—you know what friends we used to be—well—he—he—cut me dead."

There was a sudden, fierce movement at the back of the curtain behind Denny.

The Dean held up his hand.

"Yes," the pitiful voice went on, "it all seemed to have slipped away then, the old ties, the old life, all the hopes ended, like the dinner; I'm looking upon the empty plates at the banquet of life, because I haven't a wedding garment to put on.

"But I wouldn't mind that, if for one moment, before they had left to-night, they had gathered round me in the old way, just shabby as I am, and had not been ashamed of me, it would have made what is left to bear of the load lighter, if they could have grasped me by the hand, and told me that I wasn't quite a failure, that—that—I'd been handicapped beyond my strength, that I wasn't quite the last of the 'specials.'"

"Denny," said the Dean, and his voice was very gentle, "Denny dear boy, some failures are grander than success."

"What's the use, sir, if they're failures still?"

"And would you have felt happier," said the Dean, "if you could have seen your old schoolfellows again?"

"Yes," said Denny, "but they're gone—all gone—and I must go now," and he shuffled out of the chair towards the door.

Then the Dean gave the signal to the others to come out.

How they crowded round him, and shook his hands and shoulders, and thumped his back until he coughed, as he looked from one to the other in wondering astonishment.

"And," said the editor, "you thought me such a bounder as to be capable of cutting you, simply because you hadn't got a fashionable topper on!"

"Grant," said the Dean, "you asked me to recommend you a sub-editor just now. I think I have found him for you."

"Why, yes, sir Denny, here is a splendid post waiting for you. Come to my

office to-morrow morning," he added significantly.

The editor forbore to say any more for there was a lump in his throat, and more than one man turned away when they saw the look that came into the dimmed eyes, where the brightness of hope had not shone for such a long time.

The "specials" had learnt a lesson perhaps, when they were behind the Dean's curtains.

Each man knew something had been added to his humanity, and each was silently thankful because a comrade would have his manhood restored to him, and could now add his page to the book of life.

"Denny," said the Dean, "your troubles seem to be clearing away; there is only one thing left for me to do now."

"What is that, sir?" asked Denny.

"To ring for your dinner to be brought up to you; when there is an empty seat at my table I always have dinner kept until my guest arrives."

* * * * *

When the butler came, the last thing at night, to switch off the electric light in the dining-room, he paused.

The Dean was on his knees praying. With reverent voice he was thanking God for bringing back the last of the "specials."

"It's wonderful," mused Seaton, as he walked to the butler's pantry; "I believe he even prays for me."

To Chloris

AH, Chloris! that I now could sit
As unconcern'd as when
Your infant beauty could beget
No pleasure, nor no pain!
When I the dawn used to admire,
And praised the coming day,
I little thought the growing fire
Must take my rest away.

Your charms in harmless childhood lay
Like metals in the mine;
Age from no face took more away
Than youth conceal'd in thine.
But as your charms insensibly
To their perfection prest,
Fond love as unperceived did fly,
And in my bosom rest.

My passion with your beauty grew,
And Cupid at my heart,
Still as his mother favour'd you,
Threw a new flaming dart:
Each gloried in their wanton part;
To make a lover, he
Employ'd the utmost of his art—
To make a beauty, she.

Sir CHARLES SEDLEY.

Something Childish But Very Natural

By KATHERINE MANSFIELD

This further specimen of the love story is the work of one of the most distinguished English writers of recent years. In my opinion it ranks high in the series, both as a study in the idealistic and idyllic aspect of love and as a masterpiece of lyrical expression.—*Ed.*

WHETHER he had forgotten what it felt like, or his head had really grown bigger since the summer before, Henry could not decide. But his straw hat hurt him: it pinched his forehead and started a dull ache in the two bones just over the temples. So he chose a corner seat in a third-class "smoker," took off his hat and put it in the rack with his large black cardboard portfolio and his Aunt B's Christmas-present gloves. The carriage smelt horribly of wet india-rubber and soot. There were ten minutes to spare before the train went, so Henry decided to go and have a look at the book-stall. Sunlight darted through the glass roof of the station in long beams of blue and gold; a little boy ran up and down carrying a tray of primroses; there was something about the people—about the women especially—something idle and yet eager. The most thrilling day of the year, the first real day of Spring had unclosed its warm delicious beauty even to London eyes. It had put a spangle in every colour and a new tone in every voice, and city folks walked as though they carried real live bodies under their clothes with real live hearts pumping the stiff blood through.

Henry was a great fellow for books. He did not read many nor did he possess above half-a-dozen. He looked at all in the Charing Cross Road during lunch-time and at any odd time in London; the quantity with which he was on nodding terms was amazing. By his clean neat handling of them and by his nice choice of phrase when discussing them with one or another book-seller you would have thought that he had taken his pap with a tome propped before his nurse's bosom. But you would have been quite wrong. That was only Henry's way with everything he touched or said. That afternoon it was an anthology of English poetry, and he turned over the pages until a title struck his eye—*Something Childish But Very Natural!*

> Had I but two little wings,
> And were a little feathery bird,
> To you I'd fly, my dear,
> But thoughts like these are idle things,
> And I stay here.
>
> But in my sleep to you I fly,
> I'm always with you in my sleep,
> The world is all one's own,
> But then one wakes and where am I?
> All, all alone.
>
> Sleep stays not though a monarch bids,
> So I love to wake at break of day,
> For though my sleep be gone,
> Yet while 'tis dark one shuts one's lids,
> And so, dreams on.

He could not have done with the little poem. It was not the words so much as the whole air of it that charmed him! He might have written it lying in bed, very early in the morning, and watching the sun dance on the ceiling. "It is *still*, like that," thought Henry. "I am sure he wrote it when he was half-awake some time, for it's got a smile of a dream on it." He stared at the poem and then looked away and repeated it by heart, missed a word in the third verse and looked again, and again until he became conscious of shouting and shuffling, and he looked up to see the train moving slowly.

"God's thunder!" Henry dashed forward. A man with a flag and a whistle had his hand on a door. He clutched Henry somehow . . . Henry was inside with the door slammed, in a carriage that wasn't a "smoker," that had not a trace of his straw hat or the black portfolio or his Aunt B's Christmas-present gloves. Instead, in the opposite corner, close against the wall, there sat a girl. Henry did not dare to look at her, but he felt certain she was staring at him. "She must think I'm mad," he thought, "dashing into a train without even a hat, and in the evening, too." He felt so funny. He didn't know how to sit

or sprawl. He put his hands in his pockets and tried to appear quite indifferent and frown at a large photograph of Bolton Abbey. But feeling her eyes on him he gave her just the tiniest glance. Quickly she looked out of the window, and then Henry, careful of her slightest movement, went on looking. She sat pressed against the window, her cheek and shoulder half hidden by a long wave of marigold-coloured hair. One little hand in a grey cotton glove held a leather case on her lap with the initials E. M. on it. The other hand she had slipped through the window-strap, and Henry noticed a silver bangle on the wrist with a Swiss cow-bell and a silver shoe and a fish. She wore a green coat and a hat with a wreath round it. All this Henry saw while the title of the new poem persisted in his brain—*Something Childish But Very Natural.* " I suppose she goes to some school in London," thought Henry. " She might be in an office. Oh, no, she is too young. Besides she'd have her hair up if she was. It isn't even down her back." He could not keep his eyes off that beautiful waving hair. " ' My eyes are like two drunken bees . . . .' Now, I wonder if I read that or made it up ? "

That moment the girl turned round and, catching his glance, she blushed. She bent her head to hide the red colour that flew in her cheeks, and Henry, terribly embarrassed, blushed too. " I shall have to speak—have to—have to ! " He started putting his hand to raise the hat that wasn't there. He thought that funny; it gave him confidence.

" I'm—I'm most awfully sorry," he said, smiling at the girl's hat. " But I can't go on sitting in the same carriage with you and not explaining why I dashed in like that, without my hat even. I'm sure I gave you a fright, and just now I was staring at you—but that's only an awful fault of mine ; I'm a terrible starer ! If you'd like me to explain—how I got in here—not about the staring, of course" —he gave a little laugh—" I will."

For a minute she said nothing, then in a low, shy voice—" It doesn't matter."

The train had flung behind the roofs and chimneys. They were swinging into the country, past little black woods and fading fields and pools of water shining under an apricot evening sky. Henry's heart began to thump and beat to the beat of the train. He couldn't leave it like that. She sat so quiet, hidden in her fallen hair. He felt that it was absolutely necessary that she should look up and understand him—understand him at least. He leant forward and clasped his hands round his knees.

" You see I'd just put all my things—a portfolio—into a third-class ' smoker ' and was having a look at the book-stall," he explained.

As he told the story she raised her head. He saw her grey eyes under the shadow of her hat and her eyebrows like two gold feathers. Her lips were faintly parted. Almost unconsciously he seemed to absorb the fact that she was wearing a bunch of primroses and that her throat was white—the shape of her face wonderfully delicate against all that burning hair. " How beautiful she is ! How simply beautiful she is ! " sang Henry's heart, and swelled with the words, bigger and bigger and trembling like a marvellous bubble—so that he was afraid to breathe for fear of breaking it.

" I hope there was nothing valuable in the portfolio," said she, very grave.

" Oh, only some silly drawings that I was taking back from the office," answered Henry, airily. " And—I was rather glad to lose my hat. It had been hurting me all day."

" Yes," she said, " it's left a mark," and she nearly smiled.

Why on earth should those words have made Henry feel so free suddenly and so happy and so madly excited ? What was happening between them ? They said nothing, but to Henry their silence was alive and warm. It covered him from his head to his feet in a trembling wave. Her marvellous words, " It's made a mark," had in some mysterious fashion established bond between them. They could not be utter strangers to each other if she spoke so simply and so naturally. And now she was really smiling. The smile danced in her eyes, crept over her cheeks to her lips and stayed there. He leant back. The words flew from him—" Isn't life wonderful ! "

At that moment the train dashed into a tunnel. He heard her voice raised against the noise. She leant forward.

" I don't think so. But then I've been a fatalist for a long time now "—a pause—" months."

They were shattering through the dark. " Why ? " called Henry.

" Oh . . ."

Then she shrugged, and smiled and shook

her head, meaning she could not speak against the noise. He nodded and leant back. They came out of the tunnel into a sprinkle of lights and houses. He waited for her to explain. But she got up and buttoned her coat and put her hands to her hat, swaying a little. "I get out here," she said. That seemed quite impossible to Henry.

The train slowed down and the lights outside grew brighter. She moved towards his end of the carriage.

"Look here!" he stammered. "Shan't I see you again?" He got up, too, and leant against the rack with one hand. "I *must* see you again." The train was stopping.

She said breathlessly, "I come down from London every evening."

"You—you—you do—really?" His eagerness frightened her. He was quick to curb it. Shall we or shall we not shake hands? raced through his brain. One hand was on the door-handle, the other held the little bag. The train stopped. Without another word or glance she was gone.

¶

THEN came Saturday—a half day at the office—and Sunday between. By Monday evening Henry was quite exhausted. He was at the station far too early, with a pack of silly thoughts at his heels as it were driving him up and down. "She didn't say she came by this train!" "And supposing I go up and she cuts me." "There may be somebody with her." "Why do you suppose she's ever thought of you again?" "What are you going to say if you do see her?" He even prayed, "Lord if it be Thy will, let us meet."

But nothing helped. White smoke floated against the roof of the station—dissolved and came again in swaying wreaths. Of a sudden, as he watched it, so delicate and so silent, moving with such mysterious grace above the crowd and the scuffle, he grew calm. He felt very tired—he only wanted to sit down and shut his eyes—she was not coming—a forlorn relief breathed in the words. And then he saw her quite near to him walking towards the train with the same little leather case in her hand. Henry waited. He knew, somehow, that she had seen him, but he did not move until she came close to him and said in her low, shy voice—"Did you get them again?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, I got them again," and with a funny half gesture he showed her the portfolio and the gloves. They walked side by side to the train and into an empty carriage. They sat down opposite to each other, smiling timidly but not speaking, while the train moved slowly, and slowly gathered speed and smoothness. Henry spoke first.

"It's so silly," he said, "not knowing your name." She put back a big piece of hair that had fallen on her shoulder, and he saw how her hand in the grey glove was shaking. Then he noticed that she was sitting very stiffly with her knees pressed together—and he was, too—both of them trying not to tremble so. She said "My name is Edna."

"And mine is Henry."

In the pause they took possession of each other's names and turned them over and put them away, a shade less frightened after that.

"I want to ask you something else now," said Henry. He looked at Edna, his head a little on one side. "How old are you?"

"Over sixteen," she said, "and you?"

"I'm nearly eighteen. . . ."

"Isn't it hot?" she said suddenly, and pulled off her grey gloves and put her hands to her cheeks and kept them there. Their eyes were not frightened—they looked at each other with a sort of desperate calmness. If only their bodies would not tremble so stupidly! Still half hidden by her hair, Edna said:

"Have you ever been in love before?"

"No, never! Have you?"

"Oh, never in all my life." She shook her head. "I never even thought it possible."

His next words came in a rush. "Whatever have you been doing since last Friday evening? Whatever did you do all Saturday and all Sunday and to-day?"

But she did not answer—only shook her head and smiled and said, "No, you tell *me*."

"I?" cried Henry—and then he found he couldn't tell her either. He couldn't climb back to those mountains of days, and he had to shake his head, too.

"But it's been agony," he said, smiling brilliantly—"agony." At that she took away her hands and started laughing, and Henry joined her. They laughed until they were tired.

"It's so—so extraordinary," she said.

" So suddenly, you know, and I feel as if I'd known you for years."

" So do I . . ." said Henry. " I believe it must be the Spring. I believe I've swallowed a butterfly—and it's fanning its wings just here." He put his hand on his heart.

" And the really extraordinary thing is," said Edna, " that I had made up my mind that I didn't care for—men at all. I mean all the girls at College——"

" Were you at College ? "

She nodded. " A training college, learning to be a secretary." She sounded scornful.

" I'm in an office," said Henry. " An architect's office—such a funny little place up one hundred and thirty stairs. We ought to be building nests instead of houses, I always think."

" Do you like it ? "

" No, of course I don't. I don't want to do anything, do you ? "

" No, I hate it. . . . And," she said, " my mother is a Hungarian—I believe that makes me hate it even more."

That seemed to Henry quite natural. " It would," he said.

" Mother and I are exactly alike. I haven't a thing in common with my father ; he's just . . . a little man in the City—but mother has got wild blood in her and she's given it to me. She hates our life just as much as I do." She paused and frowned. " All the same, we don't get on a bit together—that's funny—isn't it ? But I'm absolutely alone at home."

Henry was listening—in a way he was listening, but there was something else he wanted to ask her. He said, very shyly, " Would you—would you take off your hat ? "

She looked startled. " Take off my hat ? "

" Yes—it's your hair. I'd give anything to see your hair properly."

She protested. " It isn't really . . ."

" Oh, it *is*," cried Henry, and then, as she took off the hat and gave her head a little toss, " Oh, Edna ! it's the loveliest thing in the world."

" Do you like it ? " she said, smiling and very pleased. She pulled it round her shoulders like a cape of gold. " People generally laugh at it. It's such an absurd colour." But Henry would not believe that. She leaned her elbows on her knees and cupped her chin in her hands. " That's how I often sit when I'm angry and then I feel it burning me up. . . . Silly ? "

" No, no, not a bit," said Henry. " I knew you did. It's your sort of weapon against all the dull horrid things."

" However did you know that ? Yes, that's just it. But however did you know ? "

" Just knew," smiled Henry. " My God ! " he cried, " what fools people are ! All the little pollies that you know and that I know. Just look at you and me. Here we are—that's all there is to be said. I know about you and you know about me—we've just found each other—quite simply—just by being natural. That's all life is—something childish and very natural. Isn't it ? "

" Yes—yes," she said eagerly. " That's what I've always thought."

" It's people that make things so—silly. As long as you can keep away from them you're safe and you're happy."

" Oh, I've thought that for a long time."

" Then you're just like me," said Henry. The wonder of that was so great that he almost wanted to cry. Instead he said very solemnly : " I believe we're the only two people alive who think as we do. In fact, I'm sure of it. Nobody understands me. I feel as though I were living in a world of strange beings—do you ? "

" Always."

" We'll be in that loathsome tunnel again in a minute," said Henry. " Edna ! can I—just touch your hair ? "

She drew back quickly. " Oh, no, please don't," and as they were going into the dark she moved a little away from him.

¶

" EDNA ! I've bought the tickets. The man at the concert hall didn't seem at all surprised that I had the money. Meet me outside the gallery doors at three, and wear that cream blouse and the corals—will you ? I love you. I don't like sending these letters to the shop. I always feel those people with ' Letters received ' in their window keep a kettle in their back parlour that would steam open an elephant's ear of an envelope. But it really doesn't matter, does it, darling. Can you get away on Sunday ? Pretend you are going to spend the day with one of the girls from the office, and let's meet at some little place and walk or find a field where we can watch the daisies uncurling. I do love you, Edna.

But Sundays without you are simply impossible. Don't get run over before Saturday, and don't eat anything out of a tin or drink anything from a public fountain. That's all, darling."

"My dearest, yes, I'll be there on Saturday—and I've arranged about Sunday, too. That is one great blessing. I'm quite free at home. I have just come in from the garden. It's such a lovely evening. Oh, Henry, I could sit and cry, I love you so to-night. Silly—isn't it? I either feel so happy I can hardly stop laughing or else so sad I can hardly stop crying and both for the same reason. But we are so young to have found each other, aren't we? I am sending you a violet. It is quite warm. I wish you were here now, just for a minute even. Good-night, darling. I am Edna."

"Safe," said Edna, "safe! And excellent places, aren't they, Henry?"

She stood up to take off her coat and Henry made a movement to help her. "No—no—it's off." She tucked it under the seat. She sat down beside him. "Oh, Henry, what have you got there? Flowers?"

"Only two tiny little roses." He laid them in her lap.

"Did you get my letter all right?" asked Edna, unpinning the paper.

"Yes," he said, "and the violet is growing beautifully. You should see my room. I planted a little piece of it in every corner and one on my pillow and one in the pocket of my pyjama jacket."

She shook her hair at him. "Henry. give me the programme."

"Here it is—you can read it with me. I'll hold it for you."

"No, let me have it."

"Well, then, I'll read it for you."

"No, you can have it after."

"Edna," he whispered.

"Oh, please don't," she pleaded. "Not here—the people."

Why did he want to touch her so much and why did she mind? Whenever he was with her he wanted to hold her hand or take her arm when they walked together, or lean against her—not hard—just lean lightly so that his shoulder should touch her shoulder—and she wouldn't even have that. All the time that he was away from her he was hungry, he craved the nearness of her. There seemed to be comfort and warmth breathing from Edna that he needed to keep him calm. Yes, that was it. He couldn't get calm with her because she wouldn't let him touch her. But she loved him. He knew that. Why did she feel so curiously about it? Every time he tried to or even asked for her hand she shrank back and looked at him with pleading frightened eyes as though he wanted to hurt her. They could say anything to each other. And there wasn't any question of their belonging to each other. And yet he couldn't touch her. Why, he couldn't even help her off with her coat. Her voice dropped into his thoughts.

"Henry!" He leaned to listen, setting his lips. "I want to explain something to you. I will—I will—I promise—after the concert."

"All right." He was still hurt.

"You're not sad, are you?" she said.

He shook his head.

"Yes, you are, Henry."

"No, really not." He looked at the roses lying in her hands.

"Well, are you happy?"

"Yes. Here comes the orchestra."

It was twilight when they came out of the hall. A blue net of light hung over the streets and houses, and pink clouds floated in a pale sky. As they walked away from the hall Henry felt they were very little and alone. For the first time since he had known Edna his heart was heavy.

"Henry!" She stopped suddenly and stared at him. "Henry, I'm not coming to the station with you. Don't—don't wait for me. Please, please leave me."

"My God!" cried Henry, and started, "what's the matter—Edna—darling—Edna, what have I done?"

"Oh, nothing—go away," and she turned and ran across the street into a square and leaned up against the square railings—and hid her face in her hands.

"Edna—Edna—my little love—you're crying. Edna, my baby girl!"

She leaned her arms along the railings and sobbed distractedly.

"Edna—stop—it's all my fault. I'm a fool—I'm a thundering idiot. I've spoiled your afternoon. I've tortured you with my idiotic mad —— clumsiness. That's it. Isn't it, Edna? For God's sake."

"Oh," she sobbed, "I do hate hurting you so. Every time you ask me to let—let you hold my hand or—or kiss me I could kill myself for not doing it—for not letting you. I don't know why I don't even." She

said wildly. "It's not that I'm frightened of you—it's not that—it's only a feeling, Henry, that I can't understand myself even. Give me your handkerchief, darling." He pulled it from his pocket. "All through the concert I've been haunted by this, and every time we meet I know it's bound to come up. Somehow I feel if once we did that—you know—held each other's hands and kissed it would be all changed—and I feel we wouldn't be free like we are—we'd be doing something secret. We wouldn't be children any more . . . silly, isn't it? I'd feel awkward with you, Henry, and I'd feel shy, and I do so feel that just because you and I are you and I, we don't need that sort of thing." She turned and looked at him, pressing her hands to her cheeks in the way he knew so well, and behind her as in a dream he saw the sky and half a white moon and the trees of the square with their unbroken buds. He kept twisting, twisting up in his hands the concert programme. "Henry! You do understand me—don't you?"

"Yes, I think I do. But you're not going to be frightened any more, are you?" He tried to smile. "We'll forget, Edna. I'll never mention it again. We'll bury the bogy in this square—now—you and I—won't we?"

"But," she said, searching his face—"will it make you love me less?"

"Oh, no," he said. "Nothing could—nothing on earth could do that."

¶

LONDON became their play-ground. On Saturday afternoons they explored. They found their own shops where they bought cigarettes and sweets for Edna—and their own tea-shop with their own table—their own streets—and one night when Edna was supposed to be at a lecture at the Polytechnic they found their own village. It was the name that made them go there. "There's white geese in that name," said Henry, telling it to Edna. "And a river and little low houses with old men sitting outside them—old sea captains with wooden legs winding up their watches, and there are little shops with lamps in the windows."

It was too late for them to see the geese or the old men, but the river was there and the houses and even the shops with lamps. In one a woman sat working a sewing-machine on the counter. They heard the whirring hum and they saw her big shadow filling the shop. "Too full for a single customer," said Henry. "It is a perfect place."

The houses were small and covered with creepers and ivy. Some of them had worn wooden steps leading up to the doors. You had to go down a little flight of steps to enter some of the others; and just across the road—to be seen from every window—was the river, with a walk beside it and some high poplar trees.

"This is the place for us to live in," said Henry. "There's a house to let, too. I wonder if it would wait if we asked it. I'm sure it would."

"Yes, I would like to live there," said Edna. They crossed the road and she leaned against the trunk of a tree and looked up at the empty house, with a dreamy smile.

"There is a little garden at the back, dear," said Henry, "a lawn with one tree on it and some daisy bushes round the wall. At night the stars shine in the tree like tiny candles. And inside there are two rooms downstairs and a big room with folding doors upstairs and above that an attic. And there are eight stairs to the kitchen—very dark, Edna. You are rather frightened—of them, you know. 'Henry, dear, would you mind bringing the lamp? I just want to make sure that Euphemia has raked out the fire before we go to bed.'"

"Yes," said Edna. "Our bedroom is at the very top—that room with the two square windows. When it is quiet we can hear the river flowing and the sound of the poplar trees far, far away, rustling and flowing in our dreams, darling."

"You're not cold—are you?" he said, suddenly.

"No—no, only happy."

"The room with the folding doors is yours." Henry laughed. "It's a mixture—it isn't a room at all. It's full of your toys and there's a big blue chair in it where you sit curled up in front of the fire with the flames in your curls—because though we're married you refuse to put your hair up and only tuck it inside your coat for the church service. And there's a rug on the floor for me to lie on, because I'm so lazy. Euphemia—that's our servant—only comes in the day. After she's gone we go down to the kitchen and sit on the table and eat an apple, or perhaps we make some tea, just for the sake of hearing the kettle sing.

That's not joking. If you listen to a kettle right through it's like an early morning in Spring."

"Yes, I know," she said. "All the different kinds of birds."

A little cat came through the railings of the empty house and into the road. Edna called it and bent down and held out her hands—"Kitty! Kitty!" The little cat ran to her and rubbed against her knees.

"If we're going for a walk just take the cat and put it inside the front door," said Henry, still pretending. "I've got the key."

They walked across the road and Edna stood stroking the cat in her arms while Henry went up the steps and pretended to open the door.

He came down again quickly. "Let's go away at once. It's going to turn into a dream."

The night was dark and warm. They did not want to go home. "What I feel so certain of is," said Henry, "that we ought to be living there, now. We oughtn't to wait for things. What's age? You're as old as you'll ever be and so am I. You know," he said, "I have a feeling often and often that it's dangerous to wait for things—that if you wait for things they only go further and further away."

"But, Henry—money! You see we haven't any money."

"Oh, well—perhaps if I disguised myself as an old man we could get a job as caretakers in some large house—that would be rather fun. I'd make up a terrific history of the house if anyone came to look over it and you could dress up and be the ghost moaning and wringing you hands in the deserted picture gallery, to frighten them off. Don't you ever feel that money is more or less accidental—that if one really wants things it's either there or it doesn't matter?"

She did not answer that—she looked up at the sky and said, "Oh dear, I don't want to go home."

"Exactly—that's the whole trouble—and we oughtn't to go home. We ought to be going back to the house and find an odd saucer to give the cat the dregs of the milk-jug in. I'm not really laughing—I'm not even happy. I'm lonely for you, Edna—I would give anything to lie down and cry" . . . and he added limply, "with my head in your lap and your darling cheek in my hair."

"But, Henry," she said coming closer, "you have faith, haven't you? I mean you are absolutely certain that we shall have a house like that and everything we want—aren't you?"

"Not enough—that's not enough. I want to be sitting on those very stairs and taking off these very boots this very minute. Don't you? Is faith enough for you?"

"If only we weren't so young . . ." she said miserably. "And yet," she sighed, "I'm sure I don't feel very young—I feel twenty at least."

¶

HENRY lay on his back in the little wood. When he moved the dead leaves rustled beneath him, and above his head the new leaves quivered like fountains of green water steeped in sunlight. Somewhere out of sight Edna was gathering primroses. He had been so full of dreams that morning that he could not keep pace with her delight in the flowers. "Yes, love, you go and come back for me. I'm too lazy." She had thrown off her hat and knelt down beside him, and by and by her voice and her footsteps had grown fainter. Now the wood was silent except for the leaves, but he knew that she was not far away and he moved so that the tips of his fingers touched her pink jacket. Ever since waking he had felt so strangely that he was not really awake at all, but just dreaming. The time before, Edna was a dream and now he and she were dreaming together and somewhere in some dark place another dream waited for him. "No, that can't be true because I can't ever imagine the world without us. I feel that we two together mean something that's got to be there just as naturally as trees or birds or clouds." He tried to remember what it had felt like without Edna, but he could not get back to those days. They were hidden by her; Edna, with the marigold hair and strange, dreamy smile filled him up to the brim. He breathed her; he ate and drank her. He walked about with a shining ring of Edna keeping the world away or touching whatever it lighted on with its own beauty. "Long after you have stopped laughing," he told her, "I can hear your laugh running up and down my veins—and yet—are we a dream?" And suddenly he saw himself and Edna as two very small children walking through the streets, looking through windows, buying things and playing with

them, talking to each other, smiling—he saw even their gestures and the way they stood, so often, quite still, face to face—and then he rolled over and pressed his face in the leaves—faint with longing. He wanted to kiss Edna, and to put his arms round her and press her to him and feel her cheek hot against his kiss and kiss her until he'd no breath left and so stifle the dream.

"No, I can't go on being hungry like this," said Henry, and jumped up and began to run in the direction she had gone. She had wandered a long way. Down in a green hollow he saw her kneeling, and when she saw him she waved and said—"Oh, Henry—such beauties! I've never seen such beauties. Come and look." By the time he had reached her he would have cut off his hand rather than spoil her happiness. How strange Edna was that day! All the time she talked to Henry her eyes laughed; they were sweet and mocking. Two little spots of colour like strawberries glowed on her cheeks and "I wish I could feel tired," she kept saying. "I want to walk over the whole world until I die. Henry—come along. Walk faster—Henry! If I start flying suddenly, you'll promise to catch hold of my feet, won't you? Otherwise I'll never come down." And "Oh," she cried, "I am so happy. I'm so frightfully happy!" They came to a weird place, covered with heather. It was early afternoon and the sun streamed down upon the purple.

"Let's rest here a little," said Edna, and she waded into the heather and lay down. "Oh, Henry, it's so lovely. I can't see anything except the little bells and the sky."

Henry knelt down by her and took some primroses out of her basket and made a long chain to go round her throat. "I could almost fall asleep," said Edna. She crept over to his knees and lay hidden in her hair just beside him. "It's like being under the sea, isn't it, dearest, so sweet and so still?"

"Yes," said Henry, in a strange husky voice. "Now, I'll make you one of violets." But Edna sat up. "Let's go in," she said.

They came back to the road and walked a long way. Edna said, "No, I couldn't walk over the world—I'm tired now." She trailed on the grass edge of the road. "You and I are tired, Henry! How much further is it?"

"I don't know—not very far," said Henry, peering into the distance. Then they walked in silence.

"Oh," she said at last, "it really is too far, Henry, I'm tired and I'm hungry. Carry my silly basket of primroses." He took them without looking at her.

At last they came to a village and a cottage with a notice "Teas Provided."

"This is the place," said Henry. "I've often been here. You sit on the little bench and I'll go and order the tea." She sat down on the bench, in the pretty garden all white and yellow with spring flowers. A woman came to the door and leaned against it watching them eat. Henry was very nice to her, but Edna did not say a word. "You haven't been here for a long spell," said the woman.

"No—the garden's looking wonderful."

"Fair," said she. "Is the young lady your sister?" Henry nodded Yes, and took some jam.

"There's a likeness," said the woman. She came down into the garden and picked a head of white jonquils and handed it to Edna. "I suppose you don't happen to know anyone who wants a cottage," said she. "My sister's taken ill and she left me hers. I want to let it."

"For a long time?" asked Henry politely.

"Oh," said the woman vaguely, "that depends."

Said Henry, "Well—I might know of somebody—could we go and look at it?"

"Yes, it's just a step down the road, the little one with the apple trees in front—I'll fetch you the key."

While she was away Henry turned to Edna and said, "Will you come?" She nodded.

They walked down the road and in through the gate and up the grassy path between the pink and white trees. It was a tiny place—two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. Edna leaned out of the top window, and Henry stood at the doorway. "Do you like it?" he asked.

"Yes," she called, and then made a place for him at the window. "Come and look. It's so sweet."

He came and leant out of the window. Below them were the apple trees tossing in a faint wind that blew a long piece of Edna's hair across his eyes. They did not move. It was evening—the pale green sky was sprinkled with stars. "Look!" she said—"stars, Henry."

"There will be a moon in two T's," said Henry.

She did not seem to move and yet she was leaning against Henry's shoulder; he put his arm round her—"Are all these trees down there—apple?" she asked in a shaky voice.

"No," darling," said Henry. "Some of them are full of angels and some of them are full of sugar almonds—but evening light is awfully deceptive." She sighed. "Henry—we mustn't stay here any longer."

He let her go and she stood up in the dusky room and touched her hair. "What has been the matter with you all day?" she said—and then did not wait for an answer but ran to him and put her arms round his neck, and pressed his head into the hollow of her shoulder. "Oh," she breathed, "I do love you. Hold me, Henry." He put his arms round her, and she leaned against him and looked into his eyes. "Hasn't it been terrible, all to-day?" said Edna. "I knew what was the matter and I've tried every way I could to tell you that I wanted you to kiss me—that I'd quite got over the feeling."

"You're perfect, perfect, perfect," said Henry.

¶

"THE thing is," said Henry, "how am I going to wait until evening?" He took his watch out of his pocket, went into the cottage and popped it into a china jar on the mantel-piece. He'd looked at it seven times in one hour, and now he couldn't remember what time it was. Well, he'd look once again. Half-past four. Her train arrived at seven. He'd have to start for the station at half-past six. Two hours more to wait. He went through the cottage again—downstairs and upstairs. "It looks lovely," he said. He went into the garden and picked a round bunch of white pinks and put them in a vase on the little table by Edna's bed. "I don't believe this," thought Henry. "I don't believe this for a minute. It's too much. She'll be here in two hours and we'll walk home, and then I'll take that white jug off the kitchen table and go across to Mrs. Biddie's and get the milk, and then come back, and when I come back she'll have lighted the lamp in the kitchen and I'll look through the window and see her moving about in the pool of lamplight. And then we shall have supper, and after supper (Bags I washing up!) I shall put some wood on the fire and we'll sit on the hearth-rug and watch it burning. There won't be a sound except the wood and perhaps the wind will creep round the house once. . . . And then we shall change our candles and she will go up first with her shadow on the wall beside her, and she will call out, Good-night, Henry—and I shall answer—Good-night, Edna. And then I shall dash upstairs and jump into bed and watch the tiny bar of light from her room brush my door, and the moment it disappears will shut my eyes and sleep until morning. Then we'll have all to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow night. Is she thinking all this, too? Edna, come quickly!

> Had I two little wings,
> And were a little feathery bird,
> To you I'd fly, my dear—

No, no, dearest. . . . Because the waiting is a sort of Heaven, too, darling. If you can understand that. Did you ever know a cottage could stand on tip-toe. This one is doing it now."

He was downstairs and sat on the door step with his hands clasped round his knees. That night when they found the village—and Edna said, "Haven't you faith, Henry?" "I hadn't then. Now I have," he said, "I feel just like God."

He leaned his head against the lintel. He could hardly keep his eyes open, not that he was sleepy, but . . . for some reason . . . and a long time passed.

Henry thought he saw a big white moth flying down the road. It perched on the gate. No, it wasn't a moth. It was a little girl in a pinafore. What a nice little girl, and he smiled in his sleep, and she smiled, too, and turned in her toes as she walked. "But she can't be living here," thought Henry. "Because this is ours. Here she comes."

When she was quite close to him she took her hand from under her pinafore and gave him a telegram and smiled and went away. There's a funny present! thought Henry, staring at it. "Perhaps it's only a make-believe one, and it's got one of those snakes inside it that fly up at you." He laughed gently in the dream and opened it very carefully. "It's just a folded paper." He took it out and spread it open.

The garden became full of shadows—they span a web of darkness over the cottage, and the trees and Henry and the telegram. But Henry did not move.

(Another Great Love Story will appear in next month's Argosy)

The Noble Game

Playing the Game in "Our Village"

THE cricket that I mean is a real solid old-fashioned match between neighbouring parishes, where each attacks the other for honour and a supper, glory and half-a-crown a man. If there be any gentlemen amongst them, it is well—if not, it is so much the better. Your gentleman cricketer is in general rather an anomalous character. Elderly gentlemen are obviously good for nothing; and young beaux are, for the most part, hampered and trammelled by dress and habit; the stiff cravat, the pinched-in waist, the dandy-walk—oh, they will never do for cricket! Now, our country lads, accustomed to the flail or the hammer (your blacksmiths are capital hitters), have the free use of their arms; they know how to move their shoulders; and they can move their feet, too—they can run; then they are so much better made, so much more athletic, and yet so much lissomer—to use a Hampshire phrase, which deserves at least to be good English.

No! a village match is the thing,—where our highest officer—our conductor (to borrow a musical term) is but a little farmer's second son; where a day-labourer is our bowler, and a blacksmith our long-stop; where the spectators consist of the retired cricketers, the veterans of the green, the careful mothers, the girls, and all the boys of two parishes, together with a few amateurs, little above them in rank, and not at all in pretension; where laughing and shouting, and the very ecstasy of merriment and good humour prevail: such a match, in short, as I attended yesterday, at the expense of getting twice wet through, and as I would attend to-morrow, at the certainty of having that ducking doubled.

Mary Russell Mitford.

WHATEVER was the issue of the frank and friendly fray
(Aye, and often has his bowling turned the fortune of the day),
Still the Kentish men fought bravely, never losing hope or heart,
Every man of the Eleven glad and proud to play his part;
And with five such mighty cricketers 'twas but natural to win—
As Felix, Wenman, Hillyer, Fuller Pilch, and Alfred Mynn.

With his tall and stately presence, with his nobly moulded form,
The broad hand was ever open, his brave heart was ever warm.
All were proud of him, all loved him. As the changing seasons pass,
As our champion lies a-sleeping underneath the Kentish grass—
Proudly, sadly, we will name him—to forget him were a sin—
Lightly lie the turf upon thee, kind and manly Alfred Mynn!

William Jeffery Prowse.

From its Saxon Beginnings

A GAME most usual in Kent, with a cricket-ball, bowled and struck with two cricket-bats between two wickets. From Saxon *cryc*, baculus, a bat or staff; which also signifies fulcimentum, a support or prop, which a cricket or little stool to sit upon. Cricket-play among the Saxons was also called *stef-plege*, staff-play.

White Kennett.

What the Stranger Told Mr. Pickwick

"PLAYED it!—Think I have—thousands of times—not here—West Indies—exciting thing—hot work—very."

"It must be rather a warm pursuit in such a climate," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"Warm!—red hot—scorching—glowing. Played a match once—single wicket—friend, the Colonel—Sir Thomas Blazo—who should get the greatest number of runs.—Won the toss—first innings—seven o'clock, a.m.—Six natives to look out—went in; kept in—heat intense—natives all fainted—taken away—fresh half dozen ordered—fainted also—Blazo bowling—supported by two natives—couldn't bowl me out—fainted, too—cleared away the Colonel—wouldn't give in—faithful attendant—Quanko Samba—last man left—sun so hot, bat in blisters, ball scorched brown—five hundred and seventy runs—rather exhausted—Quanko mustered up last remaining strength—bowled me out—had a bath and went out to dinner."

"And what became of what's-his-name, sir?" inquired an old gentleman.

"Blazo?" "No—the other gentleman."

"Quanko Samba?" "Yes, sir."

"Poor Quanko—never recovered it—bowled on, on my account—bowled off, on his own—died, sir."

CHARLES DICKENS.

HAIL cricket! glorious, manly, British game!
First of all sports! be first alike in fame! . . .
When the returning sun begins to smile,
And shed its glories round this sea-girt isle;
When new-born Nature, decked in vivid green,
Chases dull winter from the charming scene:
High panting with delight, the jovial swain
Trips it exulting o'er the flower-strewed plain;
Thy pleasure, cricket! all his heart control;
Thy eager transports dwell upon his soul:
He weighs the well-turned bat's experienced force,
And guides the rapid ball's impetuous course.

JAMES LOVE.

Cricketing Qualities

OF all the English athletic games, none, perhaps, presents so fine a scope for bringing into full and constant play the qualities both of the mind and body as that of cricket. A man who is essentially stupid will not make a fine cricketer; neither will he who is not essentially active. He must be active in all his faculties—he must be active in mind to prepare for every advantage, and active in eye and limb, to avail himself of those advantages. He must be cool-tempered, and, in the best sense of the term, manly.

CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

The Youngest Batsman

LITTLE Tom Clement is visiting at Petersfield, where he plays much at cricket: Tom bats; his grandmother bowls, and his great-grandmother watches out!

GILBERT WHITE.

The Cone

A grim story of intrigue and revenge

By H. G. WELLS

THE night was hot and overcast, the sky red-rimmed with the lingering sunset of midsummer. They sat at the open window, trying to fancy the air was fresher there. The trees and shrubs of the garden stood stiff and dark; beyond in the roadway a gas-lamp burnt, bright orange against the hazy blue of the evening. Farther were the three lights of the railway signal against the lowering sky. The man and woman spoke to one another in low tones.

"He does not suspect?" said the man, a little nervously.

"Not he," she said peevishly, as though that, too, irritated her. "He thinks of nothing but the works and the prices of fuel. He has no imagination, no poetry."

"None of these men of iron have," he said sententiously. "They have no hearts."

"*He* has not," she said. She turned her discontented face towards the window. The distant sound of a roaring and rushing drew nearer and grew in volume; the house quivered; one heard the metallic rattle of the tender. As the train passed, there was a glare of light above the cutting and a driving tumult of smoke; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight black oblongs—eight trucks—passed across the dim grey of the embankment, and were suddenly extinguished one by one in the throat of the tunnel, which, with the last, seemed to swallow down train, smoke, and sound in one abrupt gulp.

"This country was all fresh and beautiful once," he said; "and now—it is Gehenna. Down that way—nothing but pot-banks and chimneys belching fire and dust into the face of heaven. . . . But what does it matter? An end comes, an end to all this cruelty. . . . *To-morrow*." He spoke the last word in a whisper.

"*To-morrow*," she said, speaking in a whisper, too, and still staring out of the window.

"Dear!" he said, putting his hand on her. She turned with a start, and their eyes searched one another's. Hers softened to his gaze. "My dear one!" she said, and then: "It seems so strange—that you should have come into my life like this—to open——" She paused.

"To open?" he said.

"All this wonderful world"—she hesitated, and spoke still more softly—"this world of *love* to me."

Then suddenly the door clicked and closed. They turned their heads, and he started violently back. In the shadow of the room stood a great shadowy figure—silent. They saw the face dimly in the half-light, with unexpressive dark patches under the pent-house brows. Every muscle in Raut's body suddenly became tense. When could the door have opened? What had he heard? Had he heard all? What had he seen? A tumult of questions.

The new-comer's voice came at last, after a pause that seemed interminable. "Well?" he said.

"I was afraid I had missed you, Horrocks," said the man at the window, gripping the window-ledge with his hand. His voice was unsteady.

The clumsy figure of Horrocks came forward out of the shadow. He made no answer to Raut's remark. For a moment he stood above them.

The woman's heart was cold within her. "I told Mr. Raut it was just possible you might come back," she said, in a voice that never quivered.

Horrocks, still silent, sat down abruptly in the chair by her little work-table. His big hands were clenched; one saw now the fire of his eyes under the shadow of his brows. He was trying to get his breath. His eyes went from the woman he had trusted to the friend he had trusted, and then back to the woman.

By this time and for the moment all three half understood one another. Yet none dared say a word to ease the pent-up things that choked them.

It was the husband's voice that broke the silence at last.

"You wanted to see me?" he said to Raut.

Raut started as he spoke. "I came to see you," he said, resolved to lie to the last.

"Yes," said Horrocks.

"You promised," said Raut, "to show me some fine effects of moonlight and smoke."

"I promised to show you some fine effects of moonlight and smoke," repeated Horrocks in a colourless voice.

"And I thought I might catch you to-night before you went down to the works," proceeded Raut, "and come with you."

There was another pause. Did the man mean to take the thing coolly? Did he, after all, know? How long had he been in the room? Yet even at the moment when they heard the door, their attitudes . . . Horrocks glanced at the profile of the woman, shadowy pallid in the half-light. Then he glanced at Raut, and seemed to recover himself suddenly. "Of course," he said, "I promised to show you the works under their proper dramatic conditions. It's odd how I could have forgotten."

"If I am troubling you——" began Raut.

Horrocks started again. A new light had suddenly come into the sultry gloom of his eyes. "Not in the least," he said.

"Have you been telling Mr. Raut of all these contrasts of flame and shadow you think so splendid?" said the woman, turning now to her husband for the first time, her confidence creeping back again, her voice just one half-note too high. "That dreadful theory of yours that machinery is beautiful, and everything else in the world ugly. I thought he would not spare you, Mr. Raut. It's his great theory, his one discovery in art."

"I am slow to make discoveries," said Horrocks grimly, damping her suddenly. "But what I discover . . ." He stopped.

"Well?" she said.

"Nothing;" and suddenly he rose to his feet.

"I promised to show you the works," he said to Raut, and put his big, clumsy hand on his friend's shoulder. "And you are ready to go?"

"Quite," said Raut, and stood up also.

There was another pause. Each of them peered through the indistinctness of the dusk at the other two. Horrocks's hand still rested on Raut's shoulder. Raut half fancied still that the incident was trivial after all. But Mrs. Horrocks knew her husband better, knew that grim quiet in his voice, and the confusion in her mind took a vague shape of physical evil. "Very well," said Horrocks, and, dropping his hand, turned towards the door.

"My hat?" Raut looked round in the half-light.

"That's my work-basket," said Mrs. Horrocks, with a gust of hysterical laughter. Their hands came together on the back of the chair. "Here it is!" he said. She had an impulse to warn him in an undertone, but she could not frame a word. "Don't go!" and "Beware of him!" struggled in her mind, and the swift moment passed.

"Got it?" said Horrocks, standing with the door half open.

Raut stepped towards him. "Better say good-bye to Mrs. Horrocks," said the ironmaster, even more grimly quiet in his tone than before.

Raut started and turned. "Good evening, Mrs. Horrocks," he said, and their hands touched.

Horrocks held the door open with a ceremonial politeness unusual in him towards men. Raut went out, and then, after a wordless look at her, her husband followed. She stood motionless while Raut's light footfall and her husband's heavy tread, like bass and treble, passed down the passage together. The front door slammed heavily. She went to the window, moving slowly, and stood watching—leaning forward. The two men appeared for a moment at the gateway in the road, passed under the street lamp, and were hidden by the black masses of the shrubbery. The lamplight fell for a moment on their faces, showing only unmeaning pale patches, telling nothing of what she still feared, and doubted, and craved vainly to know. Then she sank down into a crouching attitude in the big arm-chair, her eyes wide open and staring out at the red lights from the furnaces that flickered in the sky. An hour after she was still there, her attitude scarcely changed.

The oppressive stillness of the evening weighed heavily upon Raut. They went side by side down the road in silence, and in silence turned into the cinder-made by-way that presently opened out the prospect of the valley.

A blue haze, half dust, half mist, touched the long valley with mystery. Beyond were

Hanley and Etruria, grey and dark masses, outlined thinly by the rare golden dots of the street lamps, and here and there a gaslit window, or the yellow glare of some late-working factory or crowded public-house. Out of the masses, clear and slender against the evening sky, rose a multitude of tall chimneys, many of them reeking, a few smokeless during a season of "play." Here and there a pallid patch and ghostly stunted beehive shapes showed the position of a pot-bank, or a wheel, black and sharp against the hot lower sky, marked some colliery where they raise the iridescent coal of the place. Nearer at hand was the broad stretch of railway, and half invisible trains shunted—a steady puffing and rumbling, with every run a ringing concussion and a rhythmic series of impacts, and a passage of intermittent puffs of white steam across the further view. And to the left, between the railway and the dark mass of the low hill beyond, dominating the whole view, colossal, inky-black, and crowned with smoke and fitful flames, stood the great cylinders of the Jeddah Company Blast Furnaces, the central edifices of the big ironworks of which Horrocks was the manager. They stood heavy and threatening, full of an incessant turmoil of flames and seething molten iron, and about the feet of them rattled the rolling-mills, and the steam-hammer beat heavily and splashed the white iron sparks hither and thither. Even as they looked, a truckful of fuel was shot into one of the giants, and the red flames gleamed out, and a confusion of smoke and black dust came boiling upwards towards the sky.

"Certainly you get some fine effects of colour with your furnaces," said Raut, breaking a silence that had become apprehensive.

Horrocks grunted. He stood with his hands in his pockets, frowning down at the dim steaming railway and the busy ironworks beyond, frowning as if he were thinking out some knotty problem.

Raut glanced at him and away again. "At present your moonlight effect is hardly ripe," he continued, looking upward; "the moon is still smothered by the vestiges of daylight."

Horrocks stared at him with the expression of a man who has suddenly awakened. "Vestiges of daylight? . . . Of course, of course." He, too, looked up at the moon, pale still in the midsummer sky. "Come along," he said suddenly, and, gripping Raut's arm in his hand, made a move towards the path that dropped from them to the railway.

Raut hung back. Their eyes met and saw a thousand things in a moment that their lips came near to say. Horrocks's hand tightened and then relaxed. He let go, and before Raut was aware of it, they were arm in arm, and walking, one unwillingly enough, down the path.

"You see the fine effect of the railway signals towards Burslem," said Horrocks, suddenly breaking into loquacity, striding fast and tightening the grip of his elbow the while. "Little green lights and red and white lights, all against the haze. You have an eye for effect, Raut. It's a fine effect. And look at those furnaces of mine, how they rise upon us as we come down the hill. That to the right is my pet—seventy feet of him. I packed him myself, and he's boiled away cheerfully with iron in his guts for five long years. I've a particular fancy for *him*. That line of red there—a lovely bit of warm orange you'd call it, Raut—that's the puddler's furnaces, and there, in the hot light, three black figures—did you see the white splash of the steam-hammer then?—that's the rolling-mills. Come along! Clang, clatter, how it goes rattling across the floor! Sheet tin, Raut—amazing stuff. Glass mirrors are not in it when that stuff comes from the mill. And, squelch!—there goes the hammer again. Come along!"

He had to stop talking to catch at his breath. His arm twisted into Raut's with benumbing tightness. He had come striding down the black path towards the railway as though he was possessed. Raut had not spoken a word, had simply hung back against Horrocks's pull with all his strength.

"I say," he said now, laughing nervously, but with an undernote of snarl in his voice, "why on earth are you nipping my arm off, Horrocks, and dragging me along like this?"

At length Horrocks released him. His manner changed again. "Nipping your arm off?" he said. "Sorry. But it's you taught me the trick of walking in that friendly way."

"You haven't learnt the refinements of it yet then," said Raut, laughing artificially again. "By Jove! I'm black and blue." Horrocks offered no apology. They stood now near the bottom of the hill, close to the fence that bordered the railway. The

ironworks had grown larger and spread out with their approach. They looked up to the blast furnaces now instead of down; the further view of Etruria and Hanley had dropped out of sight with their descent. Before them, by the stile, rose a notice-board, bearing, still dimly visible, the words, "BEWARE OF THE TRAINS," half hidden by splashes of coaly mud.

"Fine effects," said Horrocks, waving his arm. "Here comes a train. The puffs of smoke, the orange glare, the round eye of light in front of it, the melodious rattle. Fine effects! But these furnaces of mine used to be finer, before we shoved cones in their throats, and saved the gas."

"How?" said Raut. "Cones?"

"Cones, my man, cones. I'll show you one nearer. The flames used to flare out of the open throats, great—what is it?—pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night. Now we run it off in pipes, and burn it to heat the blast, and the top is shut by a cone. You'll be interested in that cone."

"But every now and then," said Raut, "you get a burst of fire and smoke up there."

"The cone's not fixed, it's hung by a chain from a lever, and balanced by an equipoise. You shall see it nearer. Else, of course, there'd be no way of getting fuel into the thing. Every now and then the cone dips, and out comes the flare."

"I see," said Raut. He looked over his shoulder. "The moon gets brighter," he said.

"Come along," said Horrocks abruptly, gripping his shoulder again, and moving him suddenly towards the railway crossing. And then came one of those swift incidents, vivid, but so rapid that they leave one doubtful and reeling. Half-way across, Horrocks's hand suddenly clenched upon him like a vice and swung him backward and through a half-turn, so that he looked up the line. And there a chain of lamp-lit carriage-windows telescoped swiftly as it came towards them, and the red and yellow lights of an engine grew larger and larger, rushing down upon them. As he grasped what this meant, he turned his face to Horrocks, and pushed with all his strength against the arm that held him back between the rails. The struggle did not last a moment. Just as certain as it was that Horrocks held him there, so certain was it that he had been violently lugged out of danger.

"Out of the way," said Horrocks, with a gasp, as the train came rattling by, and they stood panting by the gate into the ironworks.

"I did not see it coming," said Raut, still, even in spite of his own apprehensions, trying to keep up an appearance of ordinary intercourse.

Horrocks answered with a grunt. "The cone," he said, and then, as one who recovers himself, "I thought you did not hear."

"I didn't," said Raut.

"I wouldn't have had you run over then for the world," said Horrocks.

"For a moment I lost my nerve," said Raut.

¶

HORROCKS stood for half a minute, then turned abruptly towards the ironworks again. "See how fine these great mounds of mine, these clinker-heaps, look in the night! That truck yonder, up above there! Up it goes, and out-tilts the slag. See the palpitating red stuff go sliding down the slope. As we get nearer, the heap rises up and cuts the blast furnaces. See the quiver up above the big one. Not that way! This way, between the heaps. That goes to the puddling furnaces, but I want to show you the canal first." He came and took Raut by the elbow, and so they went along side by side. Raut answered Horrocks vaguely. What, he asked himself, had really happened on the line? Was he deluding himself with his own fancies, or had Horrocks actually held him back in the way of the train? Had he just been within an ace of being murdered?

Suppose this slouching, scowling monster *did* know anything? For a minute or two then Raut was really afraid for his life, but the mood passed as he reasoned with himself. After all, Horrocks might have heard nothing. At any rate, he had pulled him out of the way in time. His odd manner might be due to the mere vague jealousy he had shown once before. He was talking now of the ash-heaps and the canal. "Eigh?" said Horrocks.

"What?" said Raut. "Rather! The haze in the moonlight. Fine!"

"Our canal," said Horrocks, stopping suddenly. "Our canal by moonlight and firelight is an immense effect. You've never seen it? Fancy that! You've spent too many of your evenings philandering up in Newcastle there. I tell you, for real florid

effects—— But you shall see. Boiling water. . . ."

As they came out of the labyrinth of clinker-heap and mounds of coal and ore, the noises of the rolling-mill sprang upon them suddenly, loud, near, and distinct. Three shadowy workmen went by and touched their caps to Horrocks. Their faces were vague in the darkness. Raut felt a futile impulse to address them, and before he could frame his words, they passed into the shadows. Horrocks pointed to the canal close before them now: a weird-looking place it seemed, in the blood-red reflections of the furnaces. The hot water that cooled the tuyères came into it, some fifty yards up—a tumultuous, almost boiling affluent, and the steam rose up from the water in silent white wisps and streaks, wrapping damply about them, an incessant succession of ghosts coming up from the black and red eddies, a white uprising that made the head swim. The shining black tower of the larger blast-furnace rose overhead out of the mist, and its tumultuous riot filled their ears. Raut kept away from the edge of the water, and watched Horrocks.

"Here it is red," said Horrocks, "blood-red vapour as red and hot as sin; but yonder there, where the moonlight falls on it, and it drives across the clinker-heaps, it is as white as death."

Raut turned his head for a moment, and then came back hastily to his watch on Horrocks. "Come along to the rolling-mills," said Horrocks. The threatening hold was not so evident that time, and Raut felt a little reassured. But all the same, what on earth did Horrocks mean about "white as death" and "red as sin?" Coincidence, perhaps?

They went and stood behind the puddlers for a little while, and then through the rolling-mills, where amidst an incessant din the deliberate steam-hammer beat the juice out of the succulent iron, and black, half-naked Titans rushed the plastic bars, like hot sealing-wax, between the wheels. "Come on," said Horrocks in Raut's ear, and they went and peeped through the little glass hole behind the tuyères, and saw the tumbled fire writhing in the pit of the blast-furnace. It left one eye blinded for a while. Then, with green and blue patches dancing across the dark, they went to the lift by which the trucks of ore and fuel and lime were raised to the top of the big cylinder.

And out upon the narrow rail that overhung the furnace, Raut's doubts came upon him again. Was it wise to be here? If Horrocks did know—everything! Do what he would, he could not resist a violent trembling. Right under foot was a sheer depth of seventy feet. It was a dangerous place. They pushed by a truck of fuel to get to the railing that crowned the place. The reek of the furnace, a sulphurous vapour streaked with pungent bitterness, seemed to make the distant hillside of Hanley quiver. The moon was riding out now from among a drift of clouds, half-way up the sky above the undulating wooded outlines of Newcastle. The steaming canal ran away from below them under an indistinct bridge, and vanished into the dim haze of the flat fields towards Burslem.

"That's the cone I've been telling you of," shouted Horrocks; "and, below that, sixty feet of fire and molten metal, with the air of the blast frothing through it like gas in soda-water."

¶

RAUT gripped the hand-rail tightly, and stared down at the cone. The heat was intense. The boiling of the iron and the tumult of the blast made a thunderous accompaniment to Horrocks's voice. But the thing had to be gone through now. Perhaps, after all. . . .

"In the middle," bawled Horrocks, "temperature near a thousand degrees. If *you* were dropped into it . . . flash into flame like a pinch of gunpowder in a candle. Put your hand out and feel the heat of his breath. Why, even up here I've seen the rain-water boiling off the trucks. And that cone there. It's a damned sight too hot for roasting cakes. The top side of it's three hundred degrees."

"Three hundred degrees!" said Raut.

"Three hundred centigrade, mind!" said Horrocks. "It will boil the blood out of you in no time."

"Eigh?" said Raut, and turned.

"Boil the blood out of you in . . . No, you don't!"

"Let me go!" screamed Raut. "Let go my arm!"

With one hand he clutched at the hand-rail, then with both. For a moment the two men stood swaying. Then suddenly, with a violent jerk, Horrocks had twisted him from his hold. He clutched at Horrocks and missed, his foot went back into empty

air ; in mid-air he twisted himself, and then cheek and shoulder and knee struck the hot cone together.

He clutched the chain by which the cone hung, and the thing sank an infinitesimal amount as he struck it. A circle of glowing red appeared about him, and a tongue of flame, released from the chaos within, flickered up towards him. An intense pain assailed him at the knees, and he could smell the singeing of his hands. He raised himself to his feet, and tried to climb up the chain, and then something struck his head. Black and shining with the moonlight, the throat of the furnace rose about him.

Horrocks, he saw, stood above him by one of the trucks of fuel on the rail. The gesticulating figure was bright and white in the moonlight, and shouting, " Fizzle, you fool ! Fizzle, you hunter of women ! You hot-blooded hound ! Boil ! boil ! boil ! "

Suddenly he caught up a handful of coal out of the truck, and flung it deliberately, lump after lump, at Raut.

" Horrocks ! " cried Raut. " Horrocks!"

He clung crying to the chain, pulling himself up from the burning of the cone. Each missile Horrocks flung hit him. His clothes charred and glowed, and as he struggled the cone dropped, and a rush of hot suffocating gas whooped out and burned round him in a swift breath of flame.

His human likeness departed from him. When the momentary red had passed, Horrocks saw a charred, blackened figure, its head streaked with blood, still clutching and fumbling with the chain, and writhing in agony—a cindery animal, an inhuman, monstrous creature that began a sobbing intermittent shriek.

Abruptly, at the sight, the ironmaster's anger passed. A deadly sickness came upon him. The heavy odour of burning flesh came drifting up to his nostrils. His sanity returned to him.

" God have mercy upon me ! " he cried. " O God ! what have I done ? "

He knew the thing below him, save that it still moved and felt, was already a dead man—that the blood of the poor wretch must be boiling in his veins. An intense realisation of that agony came to his mind, and overcame every other feeling. For a moment he stood irresolute, and then, turning to the truck, he hastily tilted its contents upon the struggling thing that had once been a man. The mass fell with a thud, and went radiating over the cone. With the thud the shriek ended, and a boiling confusion of smoke, dust, and flame came rushing up towards him. As it passed he saw the cone clear again.

Then he staggered back, and stood trembling, clinging to the rail with both hands. His lips moved, but no words came to them.

Down below was the sound of voices and running steps. The clangour of rolling in the shed ceased abruptly.

¶ Among the contributors to *CASSELL'S MAGAZINE* for June (now on sale) is Sir Frank Dyson, F.R.S., LL.D., who, in view of the forthcoming Eclipse of the Sun, which will be visible in parts of the north of England and Wales on June 29th, writes on " Eclipses and Other Wonders." Sir Frank Dyson is the Astronomer Royal.

¶ In the same issue of *Cassell's Magazine* prominent first-class county cricketers contribute anecdotes to a symposium entitled " Comedy on the County Ground."

¶ The stories in the June *Cassell's* are contributed by Henry Holt, Frank H. Shaw, Albert Richard Wetjen, Owen Oliver, and other popular writers, and there is a long, complete novel. The price of the magazine is One Shilling.

Crawford's Salvation

Men at some time are masters of their fate

By FRANK HUBERT

IT was growing near the hour when the bell would ring in the printing-room and the great presses commence their strident beat. The feverish excitement of the night was evaporating; the night editor stretched himself in a gigantic yawn and let a blue pencil hang idly between his fingers.

A grimy printers' boy waited listlessly within call; the special men—men who had been sent out to write up the most important events—were already donning their coats and issuing invitations to meet at the club within ten minutes. The floor of the great room was littered with flimsy; here and there a few proofs were thrown down, the smell of printer's ink rose strongly on the atmosphere. *The Luminary* was almost in forme; within half-an-hour the first copies would be hurtling through the lead-lined opening that led to the yard, and eager packers would be flinging the still-damp bundles hither and thither recklessly, stacking them in the vans, dashing them to the hand-carts—in short, treating the greatest paper in London with indifference, and caring little that the journal they handled with such frivolity would spread light and learning into a million homes.

Binns, the night editor, took out his watch and compared it with the official clock on the wall. He was frankly uneasy, and his eyes seldom roved far from the door. A junior reporter dashed in, coat tails flying, his hair rumpled.

"It's a scoop," he said. "I happened on it by the merest luck. Woman murdered in Soho, and so far as I know there wasn't another newspaper man within miles." Binns yawned again, and a faint smile broadened his face.

"We had it in type half-an-hour ago," he said. "You mean Stella Frigold, don't you? Greek Street business? Yes; I see you're on. Read this." He tendered a galley proof, still moist, and Jackson sheepishly read the full details of the sordid case. "There'll be something more in a minute," went on Binns. "They've got the man. Did you know that?"

"No; and I only stopped for a sandwich," was the crestfallen reply. "I don't know how it's done."

"Neither do I, youngster; but it is done somehow. You see, we make it our boast that nothing ever gets ahead of *The Luminary*. Cheer up! you aren't making a bad beginning, and——"

The half-door burst open with a crash, and a tall, wan-faced spectre swept in. Within half-a-dozen feet of Binns's desk the figure straightened with gravity, and then walked unsteadily on its heels to the night editor's elbow. The few reporters left in the room drew in deep breaths. Binns rose with the air of a ponderous man, both hands gripped tightly on the arm of his chair.

"Got that story, Crawford?" he demanded sharply. "You're devilishly late, but you're forgiven if you've got the copy."

"Copy? I haven't any copy. I say, Binns, ol' chap, I've only come in for the loan of a quid, broke to the wide, not a shot in the locker, and I met Ballestier of the *Tribune* down there. You know his thirst; a quid won't see the end of it. Better make a fiver of it whilst you're on the job."

He rocked unsteadily, and the unnatural dullness of his eyes told its story to the experienced beholder, as it would have told it to an innocent child.

"You're not coming here to tell me you've lost the story?" cried Binns, in a high-pitched voice. "Good Heavens, man! you're talking through your hat. Come on, hand over; I know these pretty little jokes of yours. It's all very well to try that gag on occasionally, but they're waiting to start the machines downstairs, and—— Come on!" Crawford groped round to his breast pocket and produced nothing but a whisky flask and a wad of "flimsy," which

is the paper on which reporters make their notes. This latter the night editor seized with a peculiar growl, like that of a savage animal.

"Ah, then you did get it! Confound it all, there's not a word here! Didn't you?" There had been times when Crawford had brought a story that startled the world to the office in shorthand of the most primitive and indecipherable, but Binns was quite capable of dressing the bare skeleton in such garb as best pleased the public fancy. Still, no man, not even a night editor of repute, can make a telling story of a dozen sheets of blank, yellowish paper. And it had promised to be a full two columns of the most sensational matter *The Luminary* had ever printed.

"Fact is," stuttered Crawford, "fact is, I met a man. Nice chap; you'll know him. Higgins, of the *Pioneer;* good man, told me a lot of things. That's all."

"It's enough, more than enough. I can read between the lines. I reckoned you our best man, Crawford; I put you on to this job because I knew there wasn't another could have handled it. I trusted you as I'd have trusted myself—a deuced sight more than I'd have trusted myself if it comes to that—and you've played me down. You've been swilling again, and you've let that damned Higgins get in ahead of you. We've lost our scoop, and the *Pioneer* will be all over the shop in a few hours with our story. It's good for the paper, that; it's good for me, good for you."

His voice was as bitter as gall and wormwood, and his eyes smarted. As dear as his honour to a knight of old were the dignity and prestige of *The Luminary* to Binns, who was reputed to dream of the paper, who ate the paper and smoked the paper; who lived for and with the paper, though succeeding generations of reporters, city editors, casual contributors and leader writers came and went.

Crawford made no immediate reply, but his face worked strangely. It would seem that the hardly concealed agony of his senior's voice had struck an answering chord in his own soul; something of Binns's grief came to him and mingled there with a half-understood shame and self-disgust. None knew better than *The Luminary's* brilliant "special" the terror and degradation of the course he was running; but try as he would, aye, with tears and bitter anguish, with soul-searching and heart spasms of grief, he could not combat the insidious demon on equal terms; time after time he fought, as often he failed and fell, descending deeper and deeper into the pit on every occasion, in a mad and wholly futile attempt to still the reproachful voices that clamoured in his brain.

He knew the harmful way the quick imagination, the wonderful genius that placed him head and shoulders above his fellows served him well in that respect. Every drunken outcast encountered in the course of his work, the thousand and one miserable details of the tragedies with which he was familiar, told him a separate tale of horror; his every instinct was to spurn the temptation aside, to fly from its advances and hide himself; but always the enemy was mightier than he, and always the tale of battle was the same unqualified defeat.

"I'm sorry," he stammered out at length, clawing for handhold on Binns's desk, failing, and dropping loosely to the ground.

"Sorry!" The night editor's voice was almost a snarl. "Sorry isn't enough; if I were you, I'd fill my pockets with bricks and throw myself off Blackfriars Bridge this very night. Sorry; and you'd let the *Pioneer* get in ahead of *us!* Of us! Not one of your twopenny-ha'penny papers that get their news by goods train, but a living paper that always prides itself on being first in the field. Oh, get up, and don't lie grovelling there, for Heaven's sake!"

Crawford squirmed where he crouched, and then with an effort dragged himself to his feet.

"But you can't deny that I've brought some big scoops off for you, all the same," he said, in a low, trembling voice. The night editor's wrath seemed to have sobered him considerably.

"And you've been paid for them. Confound it, Crawford! haven't you got any sense of decency? There isn't a better newsgetter in London than you; if you'd only cut loose from this cursed drink you could climb as high as you liked. Who is there to stop you? You've got the physique of a Hercules and the brains of a genius; with a combination like that you could finish up as Prime Minister if you liked. And instead of using your talents aright you swamp them with drink, like a common hog. It's enough to make the angels weep."

"Don't you think you've said about enough?" asked Crawford, in a curiously emotionless voice. He was biting his lips queerly. "Who the deuce gave you leave and licence to question my comings and goings? Do you think that because I'm paid a beggarly salary by *The Luminary* I'm its creature, bound hand and foot, compelled to shed the last drop of blood on its behalf? I'm not that; I'm a free agent, and I'll quit the whole rotten show if you say another word. D'you hear that? I'll quit, and then you can go about Fleet Street pubs yourself and gather your own dirty news. I'll have nothing more to do with it."

Wrought up to anger as he was, Binns yet contrived to swallow his wrath. As yet there was no other man he knew who could fill Crawford's somewhat peculiar position. The other men in the office were good at their work, automata, yet intelligent automata; but not one of them rose above the high mediocrity that was *The Luminary's* standard in its employees. Unless a heaven-born genius were drafted into the office, Crawford could not be spared.

"Don't get up in the air like that," he said soothingly. "We aren't talking about the sack yet. I'm trying to get at your better self, Crawford, for I suppose you've got one. You're not all hog, are you? Take a brace on yourself, man, for Heaven's sake! Get hold of your self-respect and remember you're a sentient human being, with your own destiny in your hands. What confounded right have you to destroy your Maker's handiwork in this sottish fashion!"

"I can do what I jolly well please," muttered Crawford, but a sullen tinge of red crept into his sallow cheek. "So long as I do my work it doesn't matter to you what else I do, does it? And I do my work, you can't deny that."

"I'm denying it now. I trusted you to get a piece of news that would have done the paper no end of good. You went off the line and lost it; I expect you blabbed it to Higgins. They've got one or two scoops before now, and that's the only way they could have got them. Well, I'll overlook it this time, but don't let it occur again." He pulled a bell, and a boy came from outside the door.

"Tell them to run that reserve matter instead of the copy they were waiting for," he said; and the boy vanished. A few minutes later the building shook to the crash and roar of mighty printing presses, turning off *The Luminary* at almost incredible speed. From without came the clatter of hooves as snorting horses were backed into the yard; the sound of many voices filled the air. Another newspaper day was ended; *The Luminary* had gone to press, and the weary men who had built up the issue painstakingly, little by little, were free to seek their homes. Binns went to the corner where his coat and hat hung, washed his hands methodically in the small basin below the row of hooks. The sub-editors—men who handled Crawford's copy, and who looked on him as a sort of demi-god—passed out slowly, one by one, leaving the wan-faced, twitching figure huddled beside the night editor's desk.

Crawford shook himself together as Binns wriggled into his tight-sleeved overcoat and donned his hat.

"Coming?" asked the senior man. "I'm going to look in at the club for a sandwich; you might as well come." Crawford did not seem to hear the invitation. He lurched out of the room and the building, and, reaching the street, allowed the cool air of the night to fan his heated brow. Fleet Street was almost deserted now; a prowling taxi-cab crept to the kerb, and its driver hailed him in a husky whisper. From near-by yards came the scuttering of iron-shod hooves and the thud of falling bundles of papers. The centre of newspaperdom was sending out light and leading to every point of the compass; times without number leaving the office at a similar hour, Crawford had drawn himself proudly erect, and thought, "I, too, have done something; I am one of the workers." But to-night he shrank into himself, and the mists that obscured his brain cleared but slowly.

Binns's biting words seemed to cut into his soul, to fill him with a passion of self-loathing. He remembered the past, bright with its rich promise of fame and glory—remembered the first start he had made in life, trembling steps that led him rapidly upwards. Too rapidly for his own welfare, perhaps; for success is a heady drink for the young.

"I'll make a fight of it," he exclaimed, throwing up one hand to the sky. "I'll show him I'm not the rotter he takes me for. Yes; I'll chuck it all behind me and start afresh."

Somewhere down river a tug hooted derisively; it seemed to shriek with profane

laughter. He crammed his hat on to his head, gave a shamefaced look about him, and full of his new-born resolves hurried home.

II

THE end of a week found him still full of stern resolve; his old haunts knew him no more. He smote his hand on the bare desk before him as he wrote the scathing paragraphs that never needed his signature—the readers of *The Luminary* knew his style without the adventitious aid of initials at the foot—and swelled inwardly at thought of the victory he had won. He would say nothing to the others of the fight he was making; not until he was clear of the mire would he proclaim the fact aloud. Then he would go to Binns and tell him to his face the good thing he had done.

Ten days, and he was conscious of a waning interest in his work. Try as he might the smoothly flowing sentences would not stream from his pen; his work was artificial, lacking in virility; the merest hack work of a tyro. Binns cocked a supercilious eye at a story which Crawford had been bidden to write up, and glanced into its writer's face. What he saw there made him draw in a deep breath. The man's face was white and drawn, his eyes were bloodshot and deep-sunk in his head; his lips were parched, the corners of his mouth twitched uncontrollably.

"You're sickening for something," he said not unkindly. "This isn't up to your usual form, you know. Hadn't you better take a fortnight off; we can spare you."

"No; I'm all right. A passing indisposition, that's all. Thought the stuff was right enough though." Binns muttered something and waved him away. Once Crawford had disappeared, the night editor went through the copy with a ruthless pencil and found little of good therein.

"He's going to pieces," he said. "But he's done good work for us. No room for sentimentality, of course, only—only——"

Crawford went straight to his rooms on leaving the building. There would be no further need for his services that night; and the great work at home deserved his attention. But when he sat down to the table whereon he worked he found himself in a strange half-stupor. Thoughts would not come. He read back—page after page of closely written manuscript that would in time appear as a world-stirring novel; to his fancy it seemed incoherent, lacking in sense, deadly dull. He wrote a sentence; it was a meaningless jumble of words. There was a dull aching behind his eyebrows, a terrible restlessness possessed him. He slaked his burning thirst from a carafe near at hand, but the relief was only momentary. Flinging down his pen he sat motionless in his chair, hands clenched, sweat-beads standing out in high relief on his corrugated forehead.

"I won't give in," he said. "The spasm will pass." Similar spasms had passed before, leaving him weak and wan, certainly, but victorious nevertheless. But this time he seemed lacking in resolution; he rocked to the tides of temptation as a vessel rocks to the raving of the ocean combers. Insidiously the thoughts thrust themselves into his brain. "What's the good of resisting? What's to be gained by it? You can't work, you can't sleep, you can't eat. Give way and let the future look to itself."

He knew that a single drain of the fiery intoxicant would fill him with fictitious strength; the chilled blood would surge anew through his veins; thoughts, diamond-like in their clarity and sparkle, would fill his aching brain. Ease was to be won at the price of a momentary aberration. He turned back to his work, but the pen remained motionless in his hand until the ink was dry and caked on the nib. Before his eyes grew up alluring visions of enticing sweetness, but as he looked the sweetness changed to mockery; the very drinks he craved for seemed to mock him to his face.

"What's the use?" he muttered, answering the cry of his inner being. "There's nothing to be gained by it. A short life and a merry one. I'd rather be a rocket than a penny candle. I might light up the sky for one minute; that would be better than glimmering in a corner for a night. It isn't any use."

It might have been so different, too. If that all too brief love-dream had not been cut short so violently he would never have sought relief in the tempting, mocking cup. If only women knew the awful power they wield surely they would shrink aghast. Five years before Crawford had been a teetotaller, but when the girl he loved threw him over cruelly in favour of one who

had gained the summit of success instead of having merely placed one foot on the ladder, he had seemed to go all to pieces. There was nothing to work for, nothing to live for, save forgetfulness, and that had been hard to find until the cup had been placed within his reach.

A strangled cry broke from his parched lips as he flung the pen aside. He snatched up his hat and crammed it on to his head; almost without his own volition he was in the street, hurrying feverishly to a spot his feet seemed to know by instinct. As he entered the stifling apartment he was greeted with a loud cheer from half-a-dozen throats. Higgins was there, Bates was there; they clapped him on the back and shouted sweet praise into his ears.

"I say, that was a startler you wrote five days ago; it made my hair curl, and it takes something to do that. Come on; here's your old corner. Now, what is it?"

He had certainly not intended to seat himself; all he wanted was to inhale the familiar atmosphere. When the glass was placed before him he resolved to leave its contents untasted; but somehow or other his palate felt the stinging kiss of the liquor; the glass was empty when set down on the table, another and another followed.

"What on earth did I try to keep away from it for?" he asked himself in bewilderment. "Why, this is new life to me."

He was back in his rooms again, a lion refreshed. Thoughts careered at large through his mind; sentences that were epigrams every one formed sonorously on his lips as he took up the pen again. For an hour he wrote strenuously, and knew that what he wrote was good. From time to time he refreshed himself from a private store, and never knew how the hours fled until daylight streamed in at the windows and wakened him where he sat.

And after that the descent was rapid. There was nothing to hold him from the perilous edge; Binns's biting sarcasms fell from him as water falls from a duck's back. But his work was good, and *The Luminary* as yet could not afford to lose him. Binns endured in silence, he cursed when scoops failed to come off and congratulated himself when they succeeded; averaging the successes and failures he still calculated that Crawford was worth his salt. Until there sprang up a new man—young, enthusiastic, keen, and as steady as a rock.

Crawford's race was well-nigh run, had he but known it. A chill that Binns caught one night developed into influenza and laid him by the heels for many a day; during his enforced vacation Crawford seemed to sink deeper than ever. The chief editor—a man without sympathy, something of a martinet, one who had been pitchforked into his job without working up the ladder step by step, and so unable to understand the curious temptations that beset the newspaper man—took Binns's place.

"This is a very important matter," he said one night, handing Crawford his assignment. "I shouldn't like any paper to get ahead of us in this. We've taken up a strong attitude on the subject from the very first, and to-night will prove our theories right. Don't let anything interfere. I've wired Bermonton to keep his office open all night; the operator will be on the spot, and you must get the copy through. Understand, don't let anything interfere."

Crawford knew what was to be done. It was a peculiarly thrilling murder case; the entire business turned on the story of one man who was insensible. When he recovered consciousness he would speak, and the doctors had assured the chief editor—his brother was a specialist—that the man would find his tongue before midnight. He pocketed his assignment, buttoned up his coat and went out of the building.

The hours went by, and still the news did not come. Other men flocked in, each man with his shorthand notes, which he flattened out before him and swiftly transcribed in flowing longhand. The air-pipe to the composing room was never at rest; bunch after bunch of flimsy shot through; the clock on the bare wall pointed to ten minutes to two. Still no word came from Crawford. Two o'clock sounded loudly; the chief editor held the presses back. Half-past two; there were still no signs of Crawford.

"Go ahead," said Mr. Longstaffe, with a disgusted grunt. "He's not spoken, that must be the matter."

But when his early morning tea was brought, and with it a pile of contemporary journals, he saw glaring headlines staring at him from the first he opened. With a bitten-off curse he opened another and another. Then he leaped out of bed. Every paper in London had the story, save only *The Luminary!*

"What did you do?" he asked the delinquent, when he turned up two days later. Crawford was inclined to swagger somewhat; he laid a familiar hand on the august shoulder.

"Got sick of waiting," he said seriously. "There were some of the boys about, and we bribed the old man at the Three Feathers to grant us special privileges. That's all I remember of it. What's wrong?" The chief rose in mighty wrath.

"Everything's wrong! The fame of the paper's suffering every day at the hands of a drunken sot; that's what's wrong. I've had enough of it. This isn't a charity. You've had your chance and you've failed. You know what that means, don't you?"

"If it means the sack, I'm game. Don't think I'm dependent on you for a livelihood, Mr. Longstaffe. I've done good work for you; I'll do good work—better work—for someone else." The adulations of those who had made merry at his expense still filled his brain. Was there another Crawford in all London? Certainly not!

He said no word as he gathered his belongings together. The other men watched him in awestruck silence. The great Crawford was dismissed like any ordinary reporter.

Out in the street again Crawford looked up at the building where so many years of his working life had been spent. He was conscious of a dull shock, but the full reality had not penetrated to his understanding.

"They'll send for me to-morrow," he muttered. "They can't do without me there." But no word came, and the days went by wearily enough until he found contentment where he had found it before.

III

IT was not so easy to secure work as he had anticipated. Newspaper editors were not willing to give steady employment to a man who was notoriously erratic; they required reliability first and brilliancy second. Of what use was it to issue the first of a series of stirring articles, not knowing when the next would appear?

Then, too, the book, the *magnum opus*, dragged on wearily. The first impulse was past, and constant application to his pet weakness in no wise encouraged him to persevere. He was sinking fast, had he but known.

He tried to pull himself together; inwardly he loathed himself with a fierce, despairing disgust, but the craving was too strong to be resisted. He lacked a motive, some secure anchorage to his better self. He was a derelict, drifting on every current of impulse, drifting towards complete destruction or to the obscurity of some dread Sargasso, where derelicts most do congregate, rubbing shabby shoulders in weed-grown idleness.

At the end of a year Binns wondered idly what had become of his star man. The new youth—the one who had given such brilliant promise—had proved a mere rocket; one sensational upward swoop had been his limit of fame. He rapidly betrayed alarming mediocrity, fell into line, and was neither more nor less than a hack of hacks. The night editor remembered regretfully the days that had been, when the pages of *The Luminary* that were devoted to special matter were filched from wholesale by envious contemporaries, and scanned eagerly by a full million readers.

"It's a pity," he sighed. "I wonder where Crawford's gone. The fool, the cursed fool! And he might have been almost anything by now if he'd kept himself together. That foreign correspondent's billet simply was thrown away for want of a better man, and how he could have handled it—my soul! how he could have handled it!"

He glanced down the slabs of flimsy and sighed afresh; there was nothing of good in all the mass.

"If only I could get one column of Crawford's old stuff it would work like a charm, I fancy. This"—he blue-pencilled savagely—"this is piffle, ullage, verbiose incompetency."

To him, sitting there, came a figure—a figure hard to recognise at first. White-cheeked, haggard, ill-clothed, Crawford stood before him in the familiar attitude, holding out a bunch of papers with a diffident air.

"Like to read this, sir; I don't think it's bad." Automatically Binns reached out his hand. His eyes travelled cursorily up and down the shabby figure with the quickness of sight that a man of authority possesses; he named the signs for sheerest poverty. But a faint glow of something akin to joy permeated him. Crawford was sober—strictly and religiously sober. More than that: his hand was steady and his eyes,

though sunken, bright as stars. His mouth, once loose-lipped and lacking in steadfastness, was a thin, compressed line. Binns said nothing, but let his glance travel to the copy now flattened on the table before him. He started a little at the first paragraph, read on, turned a page.

"It's good stuff," he said. "Where did you get hold of it?"

"Picked it up—as usual. If you'd like to have it, you're welcome."

"Of course I intend to have it, that goes without saying. Got any more?"

"Not yet, but I'm on the scent of something that might be better than this. If you'd care to have it, you can." Binns scrutinised him closely. There was a marked change in his manner; it was almost appealing.

"Of course I'll have it. Your usual rates, of course. And bring along anything you might happen to pick up in this line; we can't have too much of it." A trace of anxious nervousness crept into Crawford's manner now.

"I'm glad you like it, but—I suppose you couldn't let me have a trifle on account, could you? I hate to ask it, and I wouldn't if it wasn't absolutely necessary, but——"

"I can lend you a pound, if that's any use to you." Crawford pocketed the note hurriedly, and walked away without further words. Binns elevated his eyebrows and watched the figure pass through the door. A new generation of reporters had taken the places of the old; Crawford had gone almost unrecognised.

"I know I'm several sorts of a fool," soliloquised the night editor. "I've signed my own death-warrant. He'll get drunk on that quid, and I can't see any more copy coming from that source, somehow. Starving, I reckon; and if he drinks on an empty stomach, he'll go out in a week." But he read and re-read the gem-like beauty of the article Crawford had given into his hands; several times he leaned back to slap a fat thigh and bellow his approval.

"It's a big thing; it's better than the best he's ever done. If he could keep up to this standard, but he can't."

His prognostications were doomed to defeat. At a comparatively early hour next evening Crawford appeared, once more holding a bunch of flimsy. His face was not quite so white, his eyes were clear, his hand still firm. Also, he seemed in some indefinable manner to fill out his shabby clothes better; and a cough that Binns had noticed was not so troublesome.

Binns glanced over the sub-heads of the written matter and his eye lightened. It was better than before, if that were possible; it betrayed in every line, almost in every word, the clear "Crawford" style.

"Do me one of these a day until I tell you to stop," he said. "And I'll make an order out for the cashier; you can draw pay for these two to-morrow." Crawford pocketed the order and went away; next evening, when he appeared he laid a pound note on Binns's desk.

"It came in uncommonly handy," he explained, as he thanked the night editor. "I hadn't had anything to eat for a couple of days. You see——"

He checked himself and flushed a little, but Binns was by way of being a gentleman, and so paid unnecessary attention to the further roll of copy.

"If you keep up to this standard you ought to do," he remarked conversationally. But he hardly expected it. Long experience had shown him that Crawford's most brilliant periods were usually merely preliminary to a prolonged outburst of dissipation.

A week went by, and each evening witnessed Crawford's presence in the office. Binns, a student of physiognomy, marked a great and growing change in his contributor's face; towards the end of the week it was ghastly and strained, drawn so terribly that it seemed more the face of a mummy than that of a living man. Crawford was in an agony, but when the night editor tendered a word of sympathy he received only a casual word in reply, Crawford went out slowly, head drooping, arms hanging loosely by his side.

"He can't hold out against it," muttered Binns, reading a pungent sentence over again, rolling the biting words round his tongue as a connoisseur rolls the mouthful of choice wine. "I know the signs; he'll go under again."

But Crawford turned up next night, still wan and haggard, still restless as to hands and lips, but sober as truth itself. The matter he brought was not quite up to par; still readable, and very much better than the worst of the average newspaper man, but lacking to some extent in grip.

"It's not up to form, I know," he said. "But I had a pretty bad time last night

and to-day. Heavens! Binns, if you only knew what it was like!"

"Can I do anything to help?"

"No; it's my own fight, and, please God, I'll put it through myself. I only ask for your sympathy and, if you're a praying man, your prayers."

Next night he did not appear, and Binns shook his head. Another night and a weakened spectre crawled into the office, barely able to hold itself upright, and sank into a chair.

"I know what the living hell is all right," croaked Crawford. "I've been in it."

Binns rose ponderously—he was a heavy man—and laid a somewhat podgy hand on Crawford's shoulder.

"You can't always expect to succeed. And you've done something; you've put up a hard fight. I've watched."

Crawford laughed weakly.

"Don't make any mistake, Binns; I've not given in. I've held out against it, and it's left me as weak as a newspaper serial. I seem to be all air and soda-water. I don't seem tangible at all. But I haven't given in."

"Good for you; I knew you had the will if you could only find the incentive. I'll tell you something that might help. I've been talking things over with Longstaffe; he's terribly just. I wanted him to take you back on your old footing, but he said 'No.' We hadn't any proof that you'd keep straight. I urged him to the best of my power, showed him letters I'd got about your stuff, but he wouldn't give in. He made a concession, though. It isn't much, but if you like to start in at the bottom again you'll have your chance to work up. It's a steady income, whatever else, and you can reckon on getting things of the sort you've been doing lately accepted and paid for at present rates. Like to take it on?"

Crawford got weakly to his feet, his face despite its pallor, was eager.

"D'you mean that?" His voice was hungry. "Binns, if you knew the terror that's had hold of me at nights; it's made the fight harder. I never knew but that an article might be turned down, and then—then—— Accept! Of course, I'll accept, and you're a brick, Binns."

"Longstaffe couldn't trust the 'specials' to a man who'd shown himself untrustworthy," said Binns, evidently thinking he had been human long enough. "You're on your merits now, though; don't forget that."

Crawford's salvation became a matter for gossip on the offices of *The Luminary* now. His story spread around in some strange fashion; not that he ever breathed a word himself, but more than one of the new men betrayed a keen interest.

"Mark my words," grunted old Comyn, who wrote the sports column, "it's a girl. It always is in these cases. She's promised to marry him if he reforms. But he won't; not but what he's making a hard try, but——" He shook his head pessimistically. Binns, questioned on the matter, reserved his opinion, but he owned, in his own heart, to a belief in Comyn's suggestion.

"I believe he's married someone; that's the most reasonable excuse," he thought. "That night when he wanted money, he picked it up as a starving dog snatches at a bone. Yes, he's married someone, and she's working the change. God bless her! whoever she may be."

At the end of a month Crawford had not lapsed from grace, though Binns had marked at certain intervals, signs that told him of the severe inward struggle that was going forward. But after three months had gone by, Crawford was almost his old self again; his steady laugh rang through the office frequently; he worked conscientiously, and brought in such stacks of genuinely good copy as made Binns stare.

"He'll have to go up; there's no holding him. I'll talk to Longstaffe," he said. "I think he's turned the corner now."

Improving health brought Crawford into more intimate contact with his fellows in the office; they found much in him to like. But he was resolutely deaf to the offers of refreshment that were lavished upon him; and he avoided the club and the public bars without ostentation, but with a firmness that worked its own purpose.

"If I didn't know what he had been I'd name him for the most rigid teetotaller who ever stepped," said Comyn. "Not that he's bigoted; oh, no; but he won't drink a drop. It's an age of miracles, anyhow."

"Goes straight home as soon as we've gone to press," said another. "I know, because I've watched him; he lives near me. He's always in a hurry, though; never dawdles once he's in the street. And I've watched his face as the time came round; you watch it yourselves. It gets eager, his eyes shine; bet your boots there's a woman at the bottom of it." Binns

hearing this talk, congratulated himself on a correct diagnosis.

"He's married, and that's the reason," was his thought. "There's no mistaking the signs. I *know*."

But still Crawford held his tongue; and it was not until Longstaffe returned him to his old position, after six months of steady work, that the mystery was solved. Leaving the office one night, Binns slipped his hand under the young man's arm—a thing he had not done for years.

"Longstaffe was telling me to-night that he's thinking of starting an evening paper—subject to the directors' approval. He was asking me who ought to edit it, and I told him."

Crawford pricked up his ears, with the news-getting instinct that had always been his.

"There's room for one, but who's the man?"

"Yourself. I said that if he sought London through he couldn't find a better. He jibbed at my suggestion, of course; said that he hadn't any particular cause to love you, that we hadn't proof of your reformation yet. I said I'd watched and knew you were on the up grade. It won't be a bad job if it comes off; and unless you make a fool of yourself, the job will be yours all right."

"I'd be able to get home at a decent time in the evenings then," said Crawford, as if struck with the possibilities. "You're white all through, Binns." Then he voiced some painfully inadequate thanks, showing that he was deeply touched.

"Mind you, if you show the slightest sign of going back, you're up a gum-tree. And if you get the job and then play the fool, where do I come in?"

Crawford stopped in the middle of Fleet Street swung round and looked at his companion earnestly.

"I'm not going to slip back, Binns. I've got up and I'm staying on top. Hell isn't such happiness that one hankers to go back to it. Besides, there's a reason." Binns smiled; anticipating confession, he said nothing. But all Crawford said was: "Look me up to-morrow evening—about seven. We can walk to the shop together then. I'd like you to—— I say, you don't mind if I go now, do you? I'm in a bit of a hurry; something might have happened, there's never any telling." He was off on the word, and Binns regarded his disappearing back.

"Married, without a shadow of a doubt," he said. "Well, I'll tell Mrs. Crawford that she's done society a service when I see her to-morrow."

He was conscious of a pleasurable glow as he mounted the steps of an ordinary flat, and rang the bell of a door labelled with Crawford's name. The door opened, Crawford looked out, recognised his visitor, and shouted a hasty word:

"Come in! I can't wait; I'm busy. Follow me." Binns removed his right-hand glove, and began to prepare a solid speech. He opened the half-shut door through which Crawford had disappeared, and became conscious of a slight odour of soap and steam. Having been a journalist all his life the night editor noticed that the little flat was meagrely furnished, only articles absolutely necessary were to be seen; and the general arrangement went to show that several of the articles had been added recently. Then he forgot to observe, and merely wondered. The sight that impinged upon his vision was a remarkable one. The room he had entered was covered with a serviceable linoleum, and a sound of splashing arose from the fire-place.

"Shut that door behind you," called a voice. "There's a deuce of a draught in these places. Now, sit down." Crawford, with his sleeves rolled up to the elbow, was almost completely absorbed in bathing a child!

It was an edifying spectacle. The little girl could not have been more than four years old, and, as seen through lavish soapsuds, was of an elfish beauty. She crowed and splashed with a gleeful abandon, and kept up an incessant chatter—a chatter that Crawford responded to without self-consciousness. He handled the mite of humanity with a curious slow deftness that was evidently the result of long practice; and as Binns brought himself ponderously to a seat, he shouted: "Hi, you little rip, don't bang me in the eye with that soap! Put it in your mouth; there, that's better." A choking gurgle and a scream of disgust followed; instantly the steamy little body was caught up, enveloped in a large towel and vigorously rubbed.

"Quit it! You're not so bad as all that," said Crawford. "Here, this will take the taste out of your mouth." He lifted a large mug of milk from where it was warming near the bars, and placed it to the writhing lips.

"Don't mind me," said Binns. "I'm interested. But why doesn't Mrs. Crawford attend to her offspring's welfare?" Then he flushed, thinking there might be the germs of a tragedy in the scene under his eyes.

"There's no Mrs. Crawford," said the man of that name. "Hold on, you've had enough! There, I said you'd choke. There never was a Mrs. Crawford that I'm aware of." He said no more until he had polished the little body to a healthy glow; deftly he introduced a protesting head into a tiny nightdress, toasted a pair of pink feet at the fire for a few seconds, and administered the rest of the warm milk.

"There's some bread and butter over there," he said, jerking his head to the table. Binns passed it, and the mite dug her teeth into the solid slabs, that had evidently been cut by a man. The girl regarded him seriously out of a pair of dark-brown eyes, but said nothing worthy of mention here.

"You've seen the bath of Venus, so you might as well see her couching," said Crawford, rising from the low stool on which he had been seated and leading the way, the mite nestling confidingly on his shoulder. He placed his charge in a little cot, issued a stern command that closed the sparkling eyes at once, and then looked at Binns.

"It is rather extraordinary, I'll admit it," he remarked. "Shut your eyes, Trixie, and remember that if they're opened again before to-morrow they'll turn green—like a cat's." The threat had its effect; inside a couple of minutes the child was sleeping peacefully. Not until then did Crawford tiptoe out of the room, closing the door with a gentle hand.

"There's time for a smoke before we leave for the office. Anyway, the woman who looks after her when I'm away hasn't turned up yet. Fill your pipe, and I'll tell you about it."

Binns obeyed, and seated himself in the only other chair.

"It happened close on a year ago," said Crawford, his pipe drawing smoothly. "I'd got down just about as far as I could get. There wasn't a thing left to cling on to; I was at the very bottom of the hill. I'd made up my mind to make an end of it; and I was just taking a last look round the world before leaving it, when the miracle happened.

"I'd drifted down a street that I knew of old; I'd got good copy out of it, and I expect that was why I went there. It was about nine o'clock at night, a nasty drizzling night, and cold—jove! it was cold. I hadn't had anything to drink for two days; but I knew the signs, and the craving was pretty bad. I'd just half-a-crown left in my pocket. I made up my mind that I'd spend it in the old way, take a header into the river, and go out once and for all.

"I was just trying to make up my mind which pub to enter when I heard an awful scream; I hope you may never hear one like it. It rang in my ears like the wail of a lost soul; it was repeated, and scenting tragedy I made my way towards it. It wasn't a pretty sight I saw. There was a vast brute of a drunken docker laying into a child with his belt—three years old, mind you! And a whole crowd of people were standing around, just enjoying the fun of the thing. I tell you, it woke something up inside me—something that I couldn't keep down. I forced my way through the crowd and snatched the belt from the hand of the beast, gave him one across the face with it, and then got ready for squalls. They came fast enough. He asked me what so-and-so business I had to interfere with him; wasn't the child his, and couldn't he do what he liked with her? I told him I'd come expressly with the purpose of arguing the point, and ducked the blow he aimed at me. The crowd urged him on to give me what I deserved, and then kill the kid.

"He hit at me again, but I used to know how to look after myself before—you know? It all seemed to come back, and I gave him one on the jaw that made him pant above a bit. Then he quietened a little and said: 'If you're interested in the kid, why don't you buy her, guv'nor?' I told him I'd no money, even if the child was for sale.

"'Oh, she's for sale, right enough,' he said. 'I'd be glad to get rid of her for good.' I had only half-a-crown, and it came to me that if things happened as I hoped I might need it, so I came to a conclusion.

"'I won't buy her,' I said, 'but I'll fight you for her.' And I did. It wasn't a bad fight, as fights go. I was out of form, but he was half-drunk, and it ended in my landing him in the gutter, insensible. Some of his precious pals helped him away, and then I turned around and asked where the kid's mother was. She hadn't got one; died a year before. And for twelve solid months that poor little brat had been

absolutely in the power of the brute. I tell you it made me cold all over. And, too, all of a sudden it came to me what might have been. I wasn't any better than the man I'd licked. I was worse, for I'd the elements of decency in me once. Supposing I'd married and had a child like that? That drunken brute might have been me.

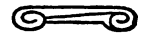
"There wasn't anyone to claim the kid; no one wanted her at any price. I did the only thing possible; I took her to my rooms and bathed her. She was in an awful state; and the half-crown that was to have paid for my last orgy before quitting the world went to buy milk and things for my salvage. That's about all there is to tell, I think. I'd got something to hold on to at last—this slum child. It went to sleep that night with its tiny hand clutched round my finger, and the touch seemed to settle about my heart with a warm feeling that I'd never known before. I thought I'd send it to a foundling hospital; but it was ill for a week afterwards, and at the end I found I couldn't part with it. I had to find it food, and I began to work again. It was a fight; but I think I've won.

"Do you remember the first night I showed up. I shouldn't have done so then but that the child was so ill I thought she was dying. She needed a lot of things, and I hadn't the money to get them. Your pound saved her life, I verily believe. I had to pocket my pride to ask you for it, as I'd pocketed my pride in coming to you at all; but she'd saved me, and I couldn't do less than try to save her. And I've won, man; I've won."

There came a ring at the bell, and Crawford opened to admit an elderly woman. He smiled and waved his hand in the direction of the inner room.

"Sleeping like a top," he said. "Coming Binns?"

"Yes, I'm coming. I think you're safe for that editorship, Crawford. If I were you I'd call that mite Sal—it's short for salvation."



The Sugar of Life

FANCY is imagination in her youth and adolescence. LANDOR.

THE mere reality of life would be inconceivably poor without the charm of fancy, which brings in its bosom, no doubt, as many vain tears as idle hopes, but lends much oftener to the illusions it calls up a gay flattering hue than one which inspires terror. W. V. HUMBOLDT.

REASON is like the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform and lasting; fancy, a meteor of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion and delusive in its direction. DR. JOHNSON.

FANCY rules over two-thirds of the universe, the past and the future, while reality is confined to the present. JEAN PAUL.

NOTHING is so atrocious as fancy without taste. GOETHE.

NATURE needs little, fancy much. GERMAN PROVERB.

FANCY restrained may be compared to a fountain, which plays highest by diminishing the aperture.—GOLDSMITH.

FANCY is capricious; wit must not be searched for, and pleasantry will not come in at a call. STERNE.

The region of speculation is the region of opinion, and a hazy, lazy, delightful region it is; good to talk in, good to smoke in, peopled with pleasant fancies and charming ideas. A. BIRRELL.

IMAGINATION is central; fancy superficial. EMERSON.

A Lodging for the Night

An incident in the life of Master Francis Villon

By R. L. STEVENSON

IT was late in November, 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eyebrows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon, at a tavern window: was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor Master of Arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis, who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honour of the jest and the grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

The air was raw and pointed, but not far below freezing; and the flakes were large, damp, and 'heaive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven, they saw the island like a large white patch, and the bridges like slim white spars, on the black ground of the river. High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pillows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

The cemetery of St. John had taken its own share of the snow. All the graves were decently covered; tall white housetops stood around in grave array; worthy burghers were long ago in bed, benightcapped like their domiciles; there was no light in all the neighbourhood but a little peep from a lamp that hung swinging in the church choir, and tossed the shadows to and fro in time to its oscillations. The clock was hard on ten when the patrol went by with halberds and a lantern, beating their hands; and they saw nothing suspicious about the cemetery of St. John.

Yet there was a small house, backed up against the cemetery wall, which was still awake, and awake to evil purpose, in that snoring district. There was not much to betray it from without; only a stream of warm vapour from the chimney-top, a patch where the snow melted on the roof and a few half-obliterated footprints at the door. But within, behind the shuttered windows, Master Francis Villon the poet, and some of the thievish crew with whom he consorted, were keeping the night alive and passing round the bottle.

A great pile of living embers diffused a strong and ruddy glow from the arched chimney. Before this straddled Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk, with his skirts picked up and his fat legs bared to the comfortable warmth. His dilated shadow cut the room in half; and the firelight only escaped on either side of his broad person, and in a little pool between his outspread feet. His face had the beery, bruised appearance of the continual drinker's; it was covered with a network of congested veins, purple in ordinary circumstances, but now pale violet, for even with his back to the fire the cold pinched him on the other side. His cowl had half fallen back, and made a strange excrescence on either side of his bull neck. So he straddled, grumbling, and cut the room in half with the shadow of his portly frame.

On the right, Villon and Guy Tabary were huddled together over a scrap of parchment; Villon making a ballade which

he was to call the " Ballade of Roast Fish," and Tabary spluttering admiration at his shoulder. The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime. As for Tabary, a broad, complacent, admiring imbecility breathed from his squash nose and slobbering lips: he had become a thief, just as he might have become the most decent of burgesses, by the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.

At the monk's other hand, Montigny and Thevenin Pensete played a game of chance. About the first there clung some flavour of good birth and training, as about a fallen angel; something long, lithe and courtly in the person; something aquiline and darkling in the face. Thevenin, poor soul, was in great feather: he had done a good stroke of knavery that afternoon in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and all night he had been gaining from Montigny. A flat smile illuminated his face; his bald head shone rosily in a garland of red curls; his little protuberant stomach shook with silent chucklings as he swept in his gains.

" Doubles or quits? " said Thevenin.

Montigny nodded grimly.

" *Some may prefer to dine in state*," wrote Villon, " *On bread and cheese on silver plate.* Or—or—help me out, Guido! "

Tabary giggled.

" *Or parsley on a golden dish*," scribbled the poet.

The wind was freshening without; it drove the snow before it, and sometimes raised its voice in a victorious whoop, and made sepulchral grumblings in the chimney. The cold was growing sharper as the night went on. Villon, protruding his lips, imitated the gust with something between a whistle and a groan. It was an eerie, uncomfortable talent of the poet's, much detested by the Picardy monk.

" Can't you hear it rattle in the gibbet? " said Villon. " They are all dancing the devil's jig on nothing, up there. You may dance, my gallants, you'll be none the warmer! Whew! what a gust! Down went somebody just now! A medlar the fewer on the three-legged medlar-tree!—I say, Dom Nicholas, it'll be cold to-night on the St. Denis Road? " he asked.

Dom Nicolas winked both his big eyes, and seemed to choke upon his Adam's apple. Montfaucon, the great grisly Paris gibbet, stood hard by the St. Denis Road, and the pleasantry touched him on the raw. As for Tabary, he laughed immoderately over the medlars; he had never heard anything more light-hearted; and he held his sides and crowed. Villon fetched him a fillip on the nose, which turned his mirth into an attack of coughing.

" Oh! stop that row," said Villon, " and think of rhymes to ' fish '."

" Doubles or quits," said Montigny doggedly.

" With all my heart," quoth Thevenin.

" Is there any more in that bottle? " asked the monk.

" Open another," said Villon. " How do you ever hope to fill that big hogshead, your body, with little things like bottles? And how do you expect to get to heaven? How many angels, do you fancy, can be spared to carry up a single monk from Picardy? Or do you think yourself another Elias—and they'll send the coach for you? "

" *Hominibus impossible*," replied the monk, as he filled his glass.

Tabary was in ecstasies.

Villon filliped his nose again.

" Laugh at my jokes, if you like," he said.

" It was very good," objected Tabary.

Villon made a face at him. " Think of rhymes to ' fish,' " he said. " What have you to do with Latin? You'll wish you knew none of it at the great assizes, when the devil calls for Guido Tabary, clericus—the devil with the hump-back and red-hot finger-nails. Talking of the devil," he added in a whisper, " look at Montigny! "

All three peered covertly at the gamester. He did not seem to be enjoying his luck. His mouth was a little to one side; one nostril nearly shut, and the other much inflated. The black dog was on his back, as people say, in terrifying nursery metaphor; and he breathed hard under the gruesome burden.

" He looks as if he could knife him," whispered Tabary, with round eyes.

The monk shuddered, and turned his face and spread his open hands to the red embers. It was the cold that thus

affected Dom Nicolas, and not any excess of moral sensibility.

"Come now," said Villon—"about this ballade. How does it run so far?" And, beating time with his hand, he read it aloud to Tabary.

They were interrupted at the fourth rhyme by a brief and fatal movement among the gamesters. The round was completed, and Thevenin was just opening his mouth to claim another victory, when Montigny leaped up, swift as an adder, and stabbed him to the heart. The blow took effect before he had time to utter a cry, before he had time to move. A tremor or two convulsed his frame; his hands opened and shut, his heels rattled on the floor; then his head rolled backward over one shoulder with the eyes wide open; and Thevenin Pensete's spirit had returned to Him who made it.

Everyone sprang to his feet; but the business was over in two twos. The four living fellows looked at each other in rather a ghastly fashion; the dead man contemplating a corner of the roof with a singular and ugly leer.

"My God!" said Tabary; and he began to pray in Latin.

Villon broke out into hysterical laughter. He came a step forward and ducked a ridiculous bow at Thevenin, and laughed still louder. Then he sat down suddenly, all of a heap, upon a stool, and continued laughing bitterly as though he would shake himself to pieces.

Montigny recovered his composure first.

"Let's see what he has about him," he remarked; and he picked the dead man's pockets with a practised hand and divided the money into four equal portions on the table. "There's for you," he said.

The monk received his share with a deep sigh, and a single stealthy glance at the dead Thevenin, who was beginning to sink into himself and topple sideways off the chair.

"We're all in for it," cried Villon, swallowing his mirth. "It's a hanging job for every man jack of us that's here—not to speak of those who aren't." He made a shocking gesture in the air with his raised right hand, and put out his tongue and threw his head on one side, so as to counterfeit the appearance of one who has been hanged. Then he pocketed his share of the spoil, and executed a shuffle with his feet as if to restore the circulation.

Tabary was the last to help himself; he made a dash at the money, and retired to the other end of the apartment.

Montigny stuck Thevenin upright in the chair, and drew out the dagger, which was followed by a jet of blood.

"You fellows had better be moving," he said, as he wiped the blade on his victim's doublet.

"I think we had," returned Villon with a gulp. "Damn his fat head!" he broke out. "It sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead?" And he fell all of a heap again upon the stool, and fairly covered his face with his hands.

Montigny and Dom Nicolas laughed aloud, even Tabary feebly chiming in.

"Cry baby," said the monk.

"I always said he was a woman," added Montigny with a sneer. "Sit up, can't you?" he went on, giving another shake to the murdered body. "Tread out that fire, Nick!"

But Nick was better employed; he was quietly taking Villon's purse, as the poet sat, limp and trembling, on the stool where he had been making a ballade not three minutes before. Montigny and Tabary dumbly demanded a share of the booty, which the monk silently promised as he passed the little bag into the bosom of his gown. In many ways an artistic nature unfits a man for practical existence.

No sooner had the theft been accomplished than Villon shook himself, jumped to his feet, and began helping to scatter and extinguish the embers. Meanwhile Montigny opened the door and cautiously peered into the street. The coast was clear; there was no meddlesome patrol in sight. Still it was judged wiser to slip out severally; and as Villon was himself in a hurry to escape from the neighbourhood of the dead Thevenin, and the rest were in a still greater hurry to get rid of him before he should discover the loss of his money, he was the first by general consent to issue forth into the street.

The wind had triumphed and swept all the clouds from heaven. Only a few vapours, as thin as moonlight, fleeting rapidly across the stars. It was bitter cold; and by a common optical effect, things seemed almost more definite than in the broadest daylight. The sleeping city was absolutely still: a company of white hoods, a field full of little Alps, below the twinkling

stars. Villon cursed his fortune. Would it were still snowing! Now, wherever he went, he left an indelible trail behind him on the glittering streets; wherever he went he was still tethered to the house by the cemetery of St. John; wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits, and, choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow.

Two things preoccupied him as he went: the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright windy phase of the night's existence, for one; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by mere fleetness of foot. Sometimes he looked back over his shoulder with a sudden nervous jerk; but he was the only moving thing in the white streets, except when the wind swooped round a corner and threw up the snow, which was beginning to freeze, in spouts of glittering dust.

Suddenly he saw, a long way before him, a black clump and a couple of lanterns. The clump was in motion, and the lanterns swung as though carried by men walking. It was a patrol. And though it was merely crossing his line of march, he judged it wiser to get out of eyeshot as speedily as he could. He was not in the humour to be challenged, and he was conscious of making a very conspicuous mark upon the snow. Just on his left hand there stood a great hotel, with some turrets and a large porch before the door; it was half-ruinous, he remembered, and had long stood empty; and so he made three steps of it and jumped in to the shelter of the porch. It was pretty dark inside, after the glimmer of the snowy streets, and he was groping forward with outspread hands, when he stumbled over some substance which offered an indescribable mixture of resistances, hard and soft, firm and loose. His heart gave a leap, and he sprang two steps back and stared dreadfully at the obstacle. Then he gave a little laugh of relief. It was only a woman, and she dead. He knelt beside her to make sure upon this latter point. She was freezing cold, and rigid like a stick. A little ragged finery fluttered in the wind about her hair, and her cheeks had been heavily rouged that same afternoon. Her pockets were quite empty; but in her stocking, underneath the garter, Villon found two of the small coins that went by the name of whites. It was little enough; but it was always something; and the poet was moved with a deep sense of pathos that she should have died before she had spent her money. That seemed to him a dark and pitiable mystery; and he looked from the coins in his hand to the dead woman, and back again to the coins, shaking his head over the riddle of man's life. Henry V of England, dying at Vincennes just after he had conquered France, and this poor jade cut off by a cold draught in a great man's doorway, before she had time to spend her couple of whites—it seemed a cruel way to carry on the world. Two whites would have taken such a little while to squander; and yet it would have been one more good taste in the mouth, one more smack of the lips, before the devil got the soul, and the body was left to birds and vermin. He would like to use all his tallow before the light was blown out and the lantern broken.

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WHILE these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was feeling, half mechanically, for his purse. Suddenly his heart stopped beating; a feeling of cold scales passed up the back of his legs, and a cold blow seemed to fall upon his scalp. He stood petrified for a moment; then he felt again with one feverish movement; and then his loss burst upon him, and he was covered at once with perspiration. To spendthrifts money is so living and actual—it is such a thin veil between them and their pleasures! There is only one limit to their fortune—that of time; and a spendthrift with only a few crowns is the Emperor of Rome until they are spent. For such a person to lose his money is to suffer the most shocking reverse, and fall from heaven to hell, from all to nothing, in a breath. And all the more if he has put his head in the halter for it; if he may be hanged to-morrow for that same purse, so dearly earned, so foolishly departed! Villon stood and cursed; he threw the two whites into the street; he shook his fist at heaven; he stamped, and was not horrified to find

himself trampling the poor corpse. Then he began rapidly to retrace his steps towards the house beside the cemetery. He had forgotten all fear of the patrol, which was long gone by at any rate, and had no idea but that of his lost purse. It was in vain that he looked right and left upon the snow: nothing was to be seen. He had not dropped it in the streets. Had it fallen in the house? He would have liked dearly to go in and see; but the idea of the grisly occupant unmanned him. And he saw besides, as he drew near, that their efforts to put out the fire had been unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had broken into a blaze, and a changeful light played in the chinks of door and window, and revived his terror for the authorities and Paris gibbet.

He returned to the hotel with the porch, and groped about upon the snow for the money he had thrown away in his childish passion. But he could only find one white; the other had probably struck sideways and sunk deeply in. With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him; and though the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? Late as was the hour, improbable as was success, he would try the house of his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoît.

He ran there all the way, and knocked timidly. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, taking heart with every stroke; and at last steps were heard approaching from within. A barred wicket fell open in the iron-studded door, and emitted a gush of yellow light.

"Hold up your face to the wicket," said the chaplain from within.

"It's only me," whimpered Villon.

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" returned the chaplain; and he cursed him with foul unpriestly oaths for disturbing him at such an hour, and bade him be off to hell, where he came from.

"My hands are blue to the wrist," pleaded Villon; "my feet are dead and full of twinges; my nose aches with the sharp air; the cold lies at my heart. I may be dead before morning. Only this once, father, and before God I will never ask again!"

"You should have come earlier," said the ecclesiastic coolly. "Young men require a lesson now and then." He shut the wicket and retired deliberately into the interior of the house.

Villon was beside himself; he beat upon the door with his hands and feet, and shouted hoarsely after the chaplain.

"Wormy old fox!" he cried. "If I had my hand under your twist, I would send you flying headlong into the bottomless pit."

A door shut in the interior, faintly audible to the poet down long passages. He passed his hand over his mouth with an oath. And then the humour of the situation struck him and he laughed and looked lightly up to heaven, where the stars seemed to be winking over his discomfiture.

What was to be done? It looked very like a night in the frosty streets. The idea of the dead woman popped into his imagination, and gave him a hearty fright; what had happened to her in the early night might very well happen to him before the morning. And he so young! and with such immense possibilities of disorderly amusement before him! He felt quite pathetic over the notion of his own fate, as if it had been some one else's, and made a little imaginative vignette of the scene in the morning when they should find his body.

He passed all his chances under review, turning the white between his thumb and forefinger. Unfortunately he was on bad terms with some old friends who would once have taken pity on him in such a plight. He had lampooned them in verses, he had beaten and cheated them; and yet now, when he was in so close a pinch, he thought there was at least one who might perhaps relent. It was a chance. It was worth trying at least, and he would go and see.

On the way, two little accidents happened to him which coloured his musings in a very different manner. For, first, he fell in with the track of a patrol, and walked in it for some hundred yards, although it lay out of his direction. And this spirited him up; at least he had confused his trail; for he was still possessed with the idea of people tracking him all about Paris over the snow, and collaring him next morning before he was awake. The other matter affected him very differently. He passed a street corner, where, not so long

before, a woman and her child had been devoured by wolves. This was just the kind of weather, he reflected, when wolves might take it into their heads to enter Paris again; and a lone man in these deserted streets would run the chance of something worse than a mere scare. He stopped and looked upon the place with an unpleasant interest—it was a centre where several lanes intersected each other; and he looked down them all one after another, held his breath to listen, lest he should detect some galloping black things on the snow or hear the sound of howling between him and the river. He remembered his mother telling him the story and pointing out the spot, while he was yet a child. His mother! If he only knew where she lived, he might make sure at least of shelter. He determined he would inquire upon the morrow; nay, he would go and see her too, poor old girl! So thinking, he arrived at his destination—his last hope for the night.

The house was quite dark, like its neighbours; and yet after a few taps, he heard a movement overhead, a door opening, and a cautious voice asking who was there. The poet named himself in a loud whisper, and awaited, not without some trepidation, the result. Nor had he to wait long. A window was suddenly opened, and a pailful of slops splashed down upon the doorstep. Villon had not been unprepared for something of the sort, and had put himself as much in shelter as the nature of the porch admitted; but for all that, he was deplorably drenched below the waist. His hose began to freeze almost at once. Death from cold and exposure stared him in the face; he remembered he was of phthisical tendency, and began coughing tentatively. But the gravity of the danger steadied his nerves.

He stopped a few hundred yards from the door where he had been so rudely used, and reflected with his finger to his nose. He could only see one way of getting a lodging, and that was to take it. He had noticed a house not far away, which looked as if it might be easily broken into, and thither he betook himself promptly, entertaining himself on the way with the idea of a room still hot, with a table still loaded with the remains of supper, where he might pass the rest of the black hours, and whence he should issue, on the morrow, with an armful of valuable plate. He even considered on what viands and what wines he should prefer; and as he was calling the roll of his favourite dainties, roast fish presented itself to his mind with an odd mixture of amusement and horror.

"I shall never finish that ballade," he thought to himself; and then, with another shudder at the recollection, "Oh, damn his fat head!" he repeated fervently, and spat upon the snow.

The house in question looked dark at first sight; but as Villon made a preliminary inspection in search of the handiest point of attack, a little twinkle of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window.

"The devil!" he thought. "People awake! Some student or some saint, confound the crew! Can't they get drunk and lie in bed snoring like their neighbours? What's the good of curfew, and poor devils of bell-ringers jumping at a rope's end in bell-towers? What's the use of day, if people sit up all night? The gripes to them!" He grinned as he saw where his logic was leading him. "Every man to his business, after all," added he, "and if they're awake, by the Lord, I may come by a supper honestly for this once, and cheat the devil."

He went boldly to the door and knocked with an assured hand. On both previous occasions, he had knocked timidly and with some dread of attracting notice; but now when he had just discarded the thought of a burglarious entry, knocking at a door seemed a mighty simple and innocent proceeding. The sound of his blows echoed through the house with thin, phantasmal reverberations, as though it were quite empty; but these had scarcely died away before a measured tread drew near, a couple of bolts were withdrawn, and one wing was opened broadly, as though no guile or fear of guile were known to those within. A tall figure of a man, muscular and spare, but a little bent, confronted Villon. The head was massive in bulk, but finely sculptured; the nose blunt at the bottom, but refining upward to where it joined a pair of strong and honest eyebrows; the mouth and eyes surrounded with delicate markings and the whole face based upon a thick white beard, boldly and squarely trimmed. Seen as it was by the light of a flickering hand-lamp, it looked perhaps nobler than it had a right to do; but it was a fine face, honourable rather than intelligent, strong, simple, and righteous.

"You knock late, sir," said the old man in resonant, courteous tones.

Villon cringed, and brought up many servile words of apology; at a crisis of this sort, the beggar was uppermost in him, and the man of genius hid his head with confusion.

"You are cold," repeated the old man, "and hungry? Well, step in." And he ordered him into the house with a noble enough gesture.

"Some great seigneur," thought Villon, as his host, setting down the lamp on the flagged pavement of the entry, shot the bolts once more into their places.

"You will pardon me if I go in front," he said, when this was done; and he preceded the poet upstairs into a large apartment, warmed with a pan of charcoal and lit by a great lamp hanging from the roof. It was very bare of furniture: only some gold plate on a sideboard; some folios; and a stand of armour between the windows. Some smart tapestry hung upon the walls, representing the crucifixion of our Lord in one piece, and in another a scene of shepherds and shepherdesses by a running stream. Over the chimney was a shield of arms.

"Will you seat yourself," said the old man, "and forgive me if I leave you? I am alone in my house to-night, and if you are to eat I must forage for you myself."

No sooner was his host gone than Villon leaped from the chair on which he had just seated himself, and began examining the room, with the stealth and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investigated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures, so far as he could see, of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory.

"Seven pieces of plate," he said. "If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints!"

And just then, hearing the old man's tread returning along the corridor, he stole back to his chair, and began humbly toasting his wet legs before the charcoal pan.

His entertainer had a plate of meat in one hand and a jug of wine in the other. He set down the plate upon the table, motioning Villon to draw in his chair, and, going to the sideboard, brought back two goblets, which he filled.

"I drink to your better fortune," he said, gravely touching Villon's cup with his own.

"To our better acquaintance," said the poet, growing bold. A mere man of the people would have been awed by the courtesy of the old seigneur, but Villon was hardened in that matter; he had made mirth for great lords before now, and found them as black rascals as himself. And so he devoted himself to the viands with a ravenous gusto, while the old man, leaning backward, watched him with steady, curious eyes.

"You have blood on your shoulder, my man," he said.

Montigny must have laid his wet right hand upon him as he left the house. He cursed Montigny in his heart.

"It was none of my shedding," he stammered.

"I had not supposed so," returned his host quietly. "A brawl?"

"Well, something of that sort," Villon admitted with a quaver.

"Perhaps a fellow murdered?"

"Oh no, not murdered," said the poet, more and more confused. "It was all fair play—murdered by accident. I had no hand in it, God strike me dead!" he added fervently.

"One rogue the fewer, I dare say," observed the master of the house.

"You may dare to say that," agreed Villon, infinitely relieved. "As big a rogue as there is between here and Jerusalem. He turned up his toes like a lamb. But it was a nasty thing to look at. I dare say you've seen dead men in your time, my lord?" he added, glancing at the armour.

"Many," said the old man. "I have followed the wars, as you imagine."

Villon laid down his knife and fork, which he had just taken up again.

"Were any of them bald?" he asked.

"Oh yes, and with hair as white as mine."

"I don't think I should mind the white so much," said Villon. "His was red." And he had a return of his shuddering and tendency to laughter, which he drowned with a great draught of wine. "I'm a little put out when I think of it," he went on. "I knew him—damn him! And then the

cold gives a man fancies—or the fancies give a man cold, I don't know which."

"Have you any money?" asked the old man.

"I have one white," returned the poet, laughing. "I got it out of a dead jade's stocking in a porch. She was as dead as Cæsar, poor wench, and as cold as a church, with bits of ribbon sticking in her hair. This is a hard world in winter for wolves and wenches and poor rogues like me."

"I," said the old man, "am Enguerrand de la Feuillée, seigneur de Brisetout, bailly du Patatrac. Who and what may you be?"

Villon rose and made a suitable reverence. "I am called Francis Villon," he said "a poor Master of Arts of this university. I know some Latin, and a deal of vice. I can make chansons, ballades, lais, virelais, and roundels, and I am very fond of wine. I was born in a garret, and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows. I may add, my lord, that from this night forward I am your lordship's very obsequious servant to command."

"No servant of mine," said the knight; "my guest for this evening, and no more."

"A very grateful guest," said Villon politely; and he drank in dumb show to his entertainer.

"You are shrewd," began the old man, tapping his forehead, "very shrewd; you have learning; you are a clerk; and yet you take a small piece of money off a dead woman in the street. Is it not a kind of theft?"

"It is a kind of theft much practised in the wars, my lord."

"The wars are the field of honour," returned the old man proudly. "There a man plays his life upon the cast; he fights in the name of his lord the king, his Lord God, and all their lordships the holy saints and angels."

"Put it," said Villon, "that I were really a thief, should I not play my life also, and against heavier odds?"

"For gain, but not for honour."

"Gain?" repeated Villon with a shrug. "Gain! The poor fellow wants supper, and takes it. So does the soldier in a campaign. Why, what are all these requisitions we hear so much about? If they are not gain to those who take them, they are loss enough to the others. The men-at-arms drink by a good fire, while the burgher bites his nails to buy them wine and wood. I have seen a good many ploughmen swinging on trees about the country, ay, I have seen thirty on one elm, and a very poor figure they made; and when I asked someone how all these came to be hanged, I was told it was because they could not scrape together enough crowns to satisfy the men-at-arms."

"These things are a necessity of war, which the low-born must endure with constancy. It is true that some captains drive over hard; there are spirits in every rank not easily moved by pity; and indeed many follow arms who are no better than brigands."

"You see," said the poet, "you cannot separate the soldier from the brigand; and what is a thief but an isolated brigand with circumspect manners? I steal a couple of mutton chops, without so much as disturbing people's sleep; the farmer grumbles a bit, but sups none the less wholesomely on what remains. You come up blowing gloriously on a trumpet, take away the whole sheep, and beat the farmer pitifully into the bargain. I have no trumpet; I am only Tom, Dick, or Harry; I am a rogue and a dog, and hanging's too good for me—with all my heart; but just you ask the farmer which of us he prefers, just find out which of us he lies awake to curse on cold nights."

"Look at us two," said his lordship. "I am old, strong, and honoured. If I were turned from my house to-morrow, hundreds would be proud to shelter me. Poor people would go out and pass the night in the streets with their children, if I merely hinted that I wished to be alone. And I find you up, wandering homeless, and picking farthings off dead women by the wayside! I fear no man and nothing; I have seen you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God's summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me out again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows; a rough, swift death, without hope or honour. Is there no difference between these two?"

"As far as to the moon," Villon acquiesced. "But if I had been born lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should not I have been warming my knees at this charcoal pan, and would not you have been groping for farthings in the snow? Should not I have been the soldier, and you the thief?"

"A thief!" cried the old man. "I a

thief! If you understood your words, you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honour to follow my argument!" he said.

"I do you too much honour in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honourable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in a sharper fashion." And he rose and paced the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup, and settled himself more comfortably in the chair, crossing his knees and leaning his head upon one hand and the elbow against the back of the chair. He was now replete and warm; and he was in nowise frightened for his host, having gauged him as justly as was possible between two such different characters. The night was far spent, and in a very comfortable fashion after all; and he felt morally certain of a safe departure on the morrow.

"Tell me one thing," said the old man, pausing in his walk. "Are you really a thief?"

"I claim the sacred rights of hospitality," returned the poet. "My lord, I am."

"You are very young," the knight continued.

"I should never have been so old," replied Villon, showing his fingers, "if I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers."

"You may still repent and change."

"I repent daily," said the poet. "There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent."

"The change must begin in the heart," returned the old man solemnly.

"My dear lord," answered Villon, "do you really fancy that I steal for pleasure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal—*Cui Deus fœminam tradit.* Make me king's pantler—make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patatrac; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same."

"The grace of God is all-powerful."

"I should be a heretic to question it," said Francis. "It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly of the Patatrac; it has given me nothing but the quick wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully. By God's grace, you have a very superior vintage."

¶

THE lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better way of thinking and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

"There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. "Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honour, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will take care to read. You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honour, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise—and yet I think I am—but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring a toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honour and love and faith are not only nobler than food and

drink, but indeed I think that we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not, while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart, which spoils the pleasure of your life and keeps you continually wretched ? "

Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonising. " You think I have no sense of honour ! " he cried. " I'm poor enough, God knows ! It's hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Any way I'm a thief—make the most of that—but I'm not a devil from hell, God strike me dead. I would have you to know I've an honour of my own, as good as yours, though I don't prate about it all day long, as if it was a God's miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me ; I keep it in its box till it's wanted. Why now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you ? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house ? Look at your gold plate ! You're strong, if you like, but you're old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of gold cups ! Did you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that ? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets, as safe as in a church ; there are you, with your heart ticking as good as new ; and here am I, ready to go out again as poor as I came in, with my one white that you threw in my teeth ! And you think I have no sense of honour—God strike me dead ! "

The old man stretched out his right arm. " I will tell you what you are," he said. " You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and a black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh ! believe me, I feel myself disgraced ! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence ; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after ? "

" Which you please," returned the poet, rising. " I believe you to be strictly honourable." He thoughtfully emptied his cup. " I wish I could add you were intelligent," he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. " Age, age ! the brains stiff and rheumatic."

The old man preceded him from a point of self-respect ; Villon followed, whistling, with his thumbs in his girdle.

" God pity you," said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

" Good-bye, papa," returned Villon with a yawn. " Many thanks for the cold mutton."

The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road.

" A very dull old gentleman," he thought. " I wonder what his goblets may be worth."

The Soul of a Journey

ONE of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey ; but I like to go by myself. I can enter society in a room ; but out-of-doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone. . . .

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences ; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a postchaise or in a Tilbury, to exchange good things with, and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence.

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

The Silent Man

Of an unfortunate failing and its amusing effects

By ARCADIE AVERTCHENKO

(*Specially translated for* THE ARGOSY *by Scotland Liddell*)

THERE were so many guests at the party that I did not even know the names of most of them. At two o'clock in the morning, after a very noisy day, we were all tired out and we began to talk of sleep. It was then found that eight of us were going to remain for the night and that there were only four spare rooms.

The hostess brought a little man to me.

"Maxim Semionovitch will share a room with you," she said.

Naturally, I would have preferred to have had a room to myself but, after a glance at the little stranger, I decided that if, under the circumstances, I had to choose one of seven evils, the best thing for me to do was to choose the least.

"Very well," said I.

"You don't mind, do you?" Maxim Semionovitch asked, timidly.

"Not a bit," said I.

"I'm rather a dull companion."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well—I am an elderly, non-talkative, mysterious man, inclined to silence, whereas you are a young fellow who probably likes to chat about one thing and the other and thus relieve your soul before you fall asleep."

"Not a bit of it!" said I. "I, too, like silence. I'm not particularly talkative."

"If that's the case — excellent!" exclaimed Maxim Semionovitch with an accent of relief. "We'll suit each other very well."

When we reached our room and started to undress, he said:

"By the way, do you know that there are some people who cannot stand silence? That's why I questioned you just now. Lots of people dislike me on this account. 'What's the matter with this fellow'? they say. 'He's as silent as a lamp-post.'"

I smiled.

"You needn't worry yourself about that when you are with me."

"Thanks very much. . . . What an agreeable exception!"

He took off one boot, placed it under his arm, and assumed an attitude of deep thought. Then, with a smile, he turned to me.

"I remember an incident that happened to me when I was very young. A friend of mine, a student called Orloff, shared a room with me. All went on well. I never spoke. One day—two days—always silent. At first he used to laugh at me and tell me that my conscience must be bad, then he became nervous and finally he began to be abusive. 'Look here!' he said, 'have you taken an oath that you will never speak? Why do you sit there as dumb as a corpse?'

"'Don't worry!' I replied. 'No,' said he, 'I'm not worrying, but say something!' 'What?' said I. 'Why?' . . . Silence again. One day—two days . . . Then one day he grabbed hold of a bottle and said, 'I'd like to smash this on your head if only I could manage to extract a human sound from you!' 'That wouldn't be fair,' I told him, then neither of us spoke for another three days.

"Once, one night, when we were undressing to go to our beds, just as you and I are now, he threw a boot at me. 'Curse you!' he cried, 'now and forever more! No human being could stand this sort of life! I don't know,' said he, 'whether I'm in a coffin or an isolation cell or where I am. To-morrow morning I'll get out of here!' And what do you think happened?" Maxim Semionovitch laughed quietly. "He fled! Upon my solemn word of honour, he packed up and fled!"

"Oh, well, he was simply nervous," said I, jumping with delight into my bed.

"Nervous? Then everybody's nervous! . . . If a girl of twenty is cheerful and healthy, would you call her nervous, too? . . . I once had a fiancée like that. At first she said to me, 'I like you because you are so serious and thoughtful and not a chatterbox.' Later on, however, when

I used to go round to her house to see her, she started to say, 'Why are you always silent?' 'What should I talk about?' I asked. 'Well,' she said, 'haven't you anything to say? What have you been doing to-day, for instance?' 'I went to the office,' I told her, 'had lunch, and now I've come to see you.' 'I feel frightened when I'm with you,' she said. 'You've never got a word to say.' 'Well, here I am,' I replied. 'Love me as I am!'

"Do you think she cared? . . . When I went to see her one afternoon, there was another fellow with her. There he was, sitting by her side and talking on and on as if he would never stop. 'I have seen this and that,' he was saying. 'I have been here and there. . . . Have you seen the latest play? . . . Do you like dancing? . . . What does the yellow flower you gave me mean? Has it a meaning or does it mean nothing at all?' . . . Really, it was astonishing the amount of words he was producing—and there she was, listening to him, and bending over towards him! . . . Of course, *I* didn't mind! I just sat there and never said a word! The other fellow squinted at me and then the pair of them began to whisper together and to smile.

"I remained silent, and after a time I left. And—would you believe it?—after two days I went to see her again and who should appear but this very same young fellow 'What are you doing here?' he cried. 'Why,' said I, 'I've come to see Maria Petrovna.' 'Get out of here at once!' shouted this little blackguard, 'or else,' said he, 'I'll kick the soul out of you!'

"I was just about to argue and to put this ridiculous boy in his place when I heard laughter behind a screen. 'I don't want you!' she cried. 'You've never got a word to say, but neither has my wardrobe or my chair! I'd as soon get engaged to a chest of drawers! There would be no difference!' Of course, I left. What a stupid girl she was!"

I smiled, half asleep, and said, "Y—e—s . . . A . . . funny . . . story . . . Goo' night!"

"Good night! Sleep well! . . . As a rule, men, at least, have some logic, but women sometimes behave very strangely. Once, in the past—I really must confess—I used to go out a good deal with a married woman. And, if you please, why did she come out with me?—It's rather laughable. The reason—would you believe it?—was because I was very silent and therefore would not talk about our meetings! She put up with my company for just three days, then she complained. 'Ye gods!' she said, 'I'd rather go out with a gas-bag or a boaster than with you, you funny old mausoleum! I've flirted a good deal in my time,' she said, 'but never before have I gone out to dinner with an inanimate corpse! Get away at once!' she cried, 'and never let my eyes rest on you again!' . . . And what do you think? She herself went to her husband and told him all about it! There you are!"

"Really?" I said, hardly opening my heavy eye-lids. "Well, let's sleep. It must be getting on for half-past three."

"Is it? It's indeed time to fall asleep."

He took off his other boot without haste and said:

"On one occasion, even a perfect stranger got cross with me. It happened in a railway carriage. We were travelling in the same compartment and, naturally, I sat there silent as I always do . . "

I shut my eyes and pretended to snore in order to put an end to the conversation.

"First he asked me, 'Are you travelling far?' 'Yes,' said I. 'What d'you mean—"Yes"?' he said . . ."

"K-r-r-r-r-r! P-f-f-f-f-f!" I snored.

"H'm! He's asleep. He's asleep, is he? . . . Oh, Youth! Youth! . . . The student that I lived with did the same. As soon as he lay down he began to snore. And then he used to wake up in the middle of the night and talk to himself. . . . Well, one won't get much conversation out of me. Ha! Ha!"

I ceased to pretend to snore, raised myself on one elbow, and said, "Look here. You may say you're not a talker, but no one would believe you if they could only hear you now."

"Why?"

"Why? . . . Well, you've hardly stopped talking since we've been here."

"My dear fellow, I am only telling you of some instances! I remember now another case that occurred with the priest about my confession. I went to him one day and he asked, as usual, 'Have you sinned?' 'Yes,' I said. 'What?' 'Quite a lot.' 'Well—What?' 'All sorts.' Then we were both silent. He was silent, and I was silent. Finally——"

"Listen!" I shouted from my bed, sitting up angrily, "I'm not interested in

what you've got to say! The more you tell me of your silence, the less I'll believe you!"

"Why?" asked my companion in an offended voice, unbuttoning his waistcoat.

"I don't think I've given you any reason to doubt my words? Even in my office I once had trouble on account of my silence. The manager came in one day and called me over to his desk. He was in a particularly good mood. 'Well,' he said, 'what's new?' 'Nothing,' I told him. 'What do you mean—"Nothing"?' he asked. 'Just that—Nothing,' I said. 'Look here!' he cried. 'What do you mean'——"

"I am asleep!" I shouted. "Good night! Good night! GOOD NIGHT!"

Maxim Semionovitch untied his tie.

"Good night! . . . 'What do you mean,' he said, 'by answering "Nothing." You might at least learn how to be polite.' 'What else could I reply to you if there is no news?' I said. 'From nothing there is nothing! Why should I start to talk about something if it is all old?' No,' said he, 'but there's a certain limit. It's all very well to be silent, but . . .'"

Slowly and noiselessly I dropped over a deep precipice, and sleep covered everything like a heavy, soft fur coat . . .

A sunbeam pierced through my closed lids and forced me to open my eyes.

Hearing someone talking, I turned over on my side and saw Maxim Semionovitch lying in his bed. He was looking at the ceiling, and still speaking slowly—

"'I am going,' she said, 'to divorce you, because I wanted to marry a living man—not a senseless, voiceless image. Why don't you speak?'

"'My dear, little Lydia,' said I, 'what shall I say?'" . . .

Variety of Pleasures

'TIS most undoubtedly true that all men are equally given to their pleasure; only thus, one man's pleasure lies one way, and another's another. Pleasures are all alike, simply considered in themselves. He that hunts, or he that governs the Commonwealth, they both please themselves alike, only we commend that, whereby we ourselves receive some benefit; as if a man place his delight in things that tend to the common good. He that takes pleasure to hear sermons enjoys himself as much as he that hears plays; and could he that loves plays endeavour to love sermons possibly he might bring himself to it as well as to any other pleasure. At first it might seem harsh and tedious, but afterwards 'twould be pleasing and delightful. So it falls out in that which is the great pleasure of some men, tobacco; at first they could not abide it, and now they cannot be without it.

While you are upon Earth enjoy the good things that are here (to that end were they given), and be not melancholy, and wish yourself in heaven. JOHN SELDEN.

THE ARGOSY VOTING COMPETITION

WE offer two prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the readers who send in the titles of the four best stories which most nearly coincide with the votes of the majority when the ballot is taken. Stories must be selected from this issue.

Entries should be made on post-cards addressed to: "Vote," THE ARGOSY, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, E.C.4, and sent in by June 24, 1927.

The result will be announced in THE ARGOSY for SEPTEMBER, on sale August 5.

The Darkened Moment

(Impressions of previous Eclipses of the Sun)

THE SHROUDED SUN

THE sun on that day [the nones of August], at the sixth hour, shrouded his glorious face, as the poets say, in hideous darkness, agitating the hearts of men by an eclipse: and on the sixth day of the week, early in the morning, there was so great an earthquake, that the ground appeared absolutely to sink down; a horrid sound being first heard from beneath the surface. During the eclipse I saw stars around the sun. . . .

On the thirteenth before the kalends of April, at the ninth hour of the fourth day of the week, there was an eclipse throughout England, as I have heard. With us, indeed, and with all our neighbours, the obscuration of the sun was so remarkable, that persons sitting at table, as it then happened almost everywhere, for it was Lent, at first feared that chaos was come again: afterwards, learning its cause, they went out, and beheld the stars around the sun. It was thought and said by many, not untruly, that the King would not continue a year in the government.

WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY.

HIGH on her speculative tower
Stood Science waiting for the hour
When Sol was destined to endure
That darkening of his radiant face
Which Superstition strove to chase,
Erewhile, with rites impure.

Afloat beneath Italian skies,
Through regions fair as Paradise,
We gaily passed,—till Nature wrought
A silent and unlooked-for change,
That checked the desultory range
Of joy and sprightly thought. . . .

No vapour stretched its wings; no cloud
Cast far or near a murky shroud;
The sky an azure field displayed;
'Twas sunlight sheathed and gently charmed,
Of all its sparkling rays disarmed,
And as in slumber laid.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

CHINESE CEREMONIES

THE very moment the inhabitants perceive the sun or moon begin to be darkened, they fall on their knees and beat the ground with their forehead; at the same time is heard a dreadful rattling of drums and kettle-drums throughout Pekin, according to the persuasion the Chinese formerly had that by this noise they assisted the sun or moon, and prevented the celestial dragon from devouring such useful planets. Though the learned, and people of quality, are quite free from this ancient error, and are persuaded that eclipses are owing to a natural cause, yet such a prevalence has custom over them, that they will not leave their ancient ceremonies: these ceremonies are practised in the same manner in all parts of the empire.

P. DU HALDE.

A Whole Nation Alarmed

APRIL 29th, 1652. Was that celebrated eclipse of the sun, so much threatened by the astrologers, and which had so exceedingly alarmed the whole nation that hardly any one would work, nor stir out of their houses. So ridiculously were they abused by knavish and ignorant star-gazers!

JOHN EVELYN.

As Foretellers of Misfortune

THEY say that eclipses foretoken misfortune, because misfortunes are common, so that, as evil happens so often, they often foretell it; whereas if they said that they predict good fortune, they would often be wrong.

BLAISE PASCAL.

Usefulness of Eclipses

IN this enlightened age, it is highly indecorous for any one to be ignorant of the phenomena of an eclipse. From a want of this knowledge have proceeded the superstitious fears which so often agitate the minds of the ignorant during an eclipse of the sun or moon; while, if the cause was understood, the folly of shutting up wells at such a time, for fear the water should acquire a noxious quality, and the absurdity of using other precautions, would be manifest: whatever men do under the influence of superstition is a strong proof of their ignorance and impiety. Let us then inquire into the true cause of such astonishing effects; our thirst for knowledge will be gratified, and we shall find fresh occasion to glorify our great Creator.

An eclipse of the sun is a natural effect caused by the shadow of the moon projected on the earth. But this can only take place when the moon, which is an opaque body, is nearly in a direct line between the sun and the earth: in this case the moon, either partially or entirely, intercepts our view of the sun; the one is called a total, the other a partial, eclipse. Thus the solar eclipse is nothing more than the situation in which the earth is placed when the shadow of the moon falls upon it, and consequently, properly speaking, it is only an eclipse of that part of the earth where the moon's shadow falls. . . .

Should it be asked, Of what use are the lunar and solar eclipses? I would answer, to those who do not measure the utility of natural things merely by their sensible benefits, they are of very great use. By their means we determine the true position and distance of towns and countries, and trace with exactness maps of the most remote regions; they also tend to confirm chronology, and direct the navigator, by informing him how far he is distant from the east or from the west. Unimportant as these advantages may appear to some, they are of the greatest utility, and contribute in part to the happiness of mankind.

CHRISTOPHER CHRISTIAN STURM.

Weird Ways of the Ancients

AT any eclipse of the moon the Romans would take their brazen pots and pans and beat them, lifting up many torches and links lighted and firebrands into the air, thinking by these superstitious means to reclaim the moon to her light. So the Macedonians were as superstitious as the Romans were at any eclipse of the moon. Nothing terrified the Gentiles more in their wars than the eclipse of the sun and the moon.

LODOWICK LLOYD.

The Game Played in the Dark

A dramatic exploit in the career of Max Carrados

By ERNEST BRAMAH

"IT'S a funny thing, sir," said Inspector Beedel, regarding Mr. Carrados with the pensive respect that he always extended towards the blind amateur, "it's a funny thing, but nothing seems to go on abroad now but what you'll find some trace of it here in London if you take the trouble to look."

"In the right quarter," contributed Carrados.

"Why, yes," agreed the inspector. "But nothing comes of it nine times out of ten, because it's no one's particular business to look here or the thing's been taken up and finished from the other end. I don't mean ordinary murders or single-handed burglaries, of course, but"—a modest ring of professional pride betrayed the quiet enthusiast—"real First-Class Crimes."

"The State Antonio Five per cent. Bond Coupons?" suggested Carrados.

"Ah, you are right, Mr. Carrados." Beedel shook his head sadly, as though perhaps on that occasion someone ought to have looked. "A man has a fit in the inquiry office of the Agent-General for British Equatoria, and two hundred and fifty thousand pounds' worth of faked securities is the result in Mexico. Then look at that jade fylfot charm pawned for one-and-three down at the Basin and the use that could have been made of it in the Kharkov 'ritual murder' trial."

"The West Hampstead Lost Memory puzzle and the Baripur bomb conspiracy that might have been smothered if one had known."

"Quite true, sir. And the three children of that Chicago millionaire—Cyrus V. Bunting, wasn't it?—kidnapped in broad daylight outside the New York Lyric and here, three weeks later, the dumb girl who chalked the wall at Charing Cross. I remember reading once in a financial article that every piece of foreign gold had a string from it leading to Threadneedle Street. A figure of speech, sir, of course, but apt enough, I don't doubt. Well, it seems to me that every big crime done abroad leaves a finger-print here in London—if only, as you say, we look in the right quarter."

"And at the right moment," added Carrados. "The time is often the present; the place the spot beneath our very noses. We take a step and the chance has gone for ever."

The inspector nodded and contributed a weighty monosyllable of sympathetic agreement. The most prosaic of men in the pursuit of his ordinary duties, it nevertheless subtly appealed to some half-dormant streak of vanity to have his profession taken romantically when there was no serious work on hand.

"No; perhaps not 'for ever' in one case in a thousand, after all," amended the blind man thoughtfully. "This perpetual duel between the Law and the Criminal has sometimes appeared to me in the terms of a game of cricket, inspector. Law is in the field; the Criminal at the wicket. If Law makes a mistake—sends down a loose ball or drops a catch—the Criminal scores a little or has another lease of life. But if *he* makes a mistake—if he lets a straight ball pass or spoons towards a steady man—he is done for. His mistakes are fatal; those of the Law are only temporary and retrievable."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Beedel, rising—the conversation had taken place in the study at The Turrets, where Beedel had found occasion to present himself—"very apt indeed. I must remember that. Well, sir, I only hope that this 'Guido the Razor' lot will send a catch in our direction."

The "this" delicately marked Inspector Beedel's instinctive contempt for Guido. As a craftsman he was compelled, on his reputation, to respect him, and he had accordingly availed himself of Carrados's friendship for a confabulation. As a man—he was a foreigner: worse, an Italian, and

if left to his own resources the inspector would have opposed to his sinuous flexibility, those rigid, essentially Britannia-metal methods of the force that strike the impartial observer as so ponderous, so amateurish and conventional and, it must be admitted, often so curiously and inexplicably successful.

The offence that had circuitously brought "il Rasojo" and his "lot" within the cognizance of Scotland Yard outlines the kind of story that is discreetly hinted at by the society paragraphist of the day, politely disbelieved by the astute reader, and then at last laid indiscreetly bare in all its details by the inevitable princessly "Recollections" of a generation later. It centred round an impending royal marriage in Vienna, a certain jealous "Countess X." (here you have the discretion of the paragrapher), and a document or two that might be relied upon (the aristocratic biographer will impartially sum up the contingencies) to play the deuce with the approaching nuptials. To procure the evidence of these papers the Countess enlisted the services of Guido, as reliable a scoundrel as she could probably have selected for the commission. To a certain point—to the abstraction of the papers, in fact—he succeeded, but it was with pursuit close upon his heels. There was that disadvantage in employing a rogue to do work that implicated roguery, for whatever moral right the Countess had to the property, her accomplice had no legal right whatever to his liberty. On half-a-dozen charges at least he could be arrested on sight in as many capitals of Europe. He slipped out of Vienna by the Nordbahn with his destination known, resourcefully stopped the express outside Czaslau and got away across to Chrudim.

By this time the game and the moves were pretty well understood in more than one keenly interested quarter. Diplomacy supplemented justice and the immediate history of Guido became that of a fox hunted from covert to covert with all the familiar earths stopped against him. From Pardubitz he passed on to Glatz, reached Breslau and went down the Oder to Stettin. Out of the liberality of his employer's advances he had ample funds to keep going, and he dropped and rejoined his accomplices as the occasion ruled. A week's harrying found him in Copenhagen, still with no time to spare, and he missed his purpose there. He crossed to Malmo by ferry, took the connecting night train to Stockholm and the same morning sailed down the Saltsjon, ostensibly bound for Obo, intending to cross to Revel and so get back to central Europe by the less frequented routes. But in this move again luck was against him and receiving warning just in time, and by the mysterious agency that had so far protected him, he contrived to be dropped from the steamer by boat among the islands of the Archipelago, made his way to Helsingfors and within forty-eight hours was again on the Frihavnen with pursuit for the moment blinked.

To appreciate the exact significance of these wanderings it is necessary to recall the conditions. Guido was not zigzagging a course about Europe in an aimless search for the picturesque, still less inspired by any love of the melodramatic. To him every step was vital, each tangent or rebound the necessary outcome of his much-badgered plans. In his pocket reposed the papers for which he had run grave risks. The price agreed upon for the service was sufficiently lavish to make the risks worth taking time after time; but in order to consummate the transaction it was necessary that the booty should be put into his employer's hand. Half-way across Europe that employer was waiting with such patience as she could maintain, herself watched and shadowed at every step. The Countess X. was sufficiently exalted to be personally immune from the high-handed methods of her country's secret service, but every approach to her was tapped. The problem was for Guido to earn a long enough respite to enable him to communicate his position to the Countess and for her to go or to reach him by a trusty hand. Then the whole fabric of intrigue could fall to pieces, but so far Guido had been kept successfully on the run and in the meanwhile time was pressing.

"They lost him after the *Hutola*," Beedel reported, in explaining the circumstances to Max Carrados. "Three days later they found that he'd been back again in Copenhagen but by that time he'd flown. Now they're without a trace except the inference of these 'Orange peach blossom' agonies in *The Times*. But the Countess has gone hurriedly to Paris; and Lafayard thinks it all points to London."

"I suppose the Foreign Office is anxious to oblige just now?"

"I expect so, sir," agreed Beedel, "but,

of course, my instructions don't come from that quarter. What appeals to *us* is that it would be a feather in our caps—they're still a little sore up at the Yard about Hans the Piper."

"Naturally," assented Carrados. "Well, I'll see what I can do if there is real occasion. Let me know anything and, if you see your chance yourself, come round for a talk if you like on—to-day's Wednesday?—I shall be in at any rate on Friday evening."

¶

WITHOUT being a precisian, the blind man was usually exact in such matters. There are those who hold that an engagement must be kept at all hazard: men who would miss a death-bed message in order to keep literal faith with a beggar. Carrados took lower, if more substantial ground. "My word," he sometimes had occasion to remark, "is subject to contingencies, like everything else about me. If I make a promise it is conditional on nothing which seems more important arising to counteract it. That, among men of sense, is understood." And, as it happened, something did occur on this occasion.

He was summoned to the telephone just before dinner on Friday evening to receive a message personally. Greatorex, his secretary, had taken the call, but came in to say that the caller would give him nothing beyond his name—Brebner. The name was unknown to Carrados, but such incidents were not uncommon, and he proceeded to comply.

"Yes," he responded; "I am Max Carrados speaking. What is it?"

"Oh, it is you, sir, is it? Mr. Brickwill told me to get to you direct."

"Well, you are all right. Brickwill? Are you the British Museum?"

"Yes. I am Brebner in the Chaldean Art Department. They are in a great stew here. We have just found out that someone has managed to get access to the second Inner Greek Room and looted some of the cabinets there. It is all a mystery as yet."

"What is missing?" asked Carrados.

"So far we can only definitely speak of about six trays of Greek coins—a hundred to a hundred and twenty, roughly."

"Important?"

The line conveyed a caustic bark of tragic amusement.

"Why, yes, I should say so. The beggar seems to have known his business. All fine specimens of the best period. Syracuse—Messana—Croton—Amphipolis. Eumenes—Evainetos—Kimons. The chief quite wept."

Carrados groaned. There was not a piece among them that he had not handled lovingly.

"What are you doing?" he demanded.

"Mr. Brickwill has been to Scotland Yard and, on advice, we are not making it public as yet. We don't want a hint of it to be dropped anywhere, if you don't mind, sir."

"That will be all right."

"It was for that reason that I was to speak with you personally. We are notifying the chief dealers and likely collectors to whom the coins, or some of them, may be offered at once if it is thought that we haven't found it out yet. Judging from the expertness displayed in the selection, we don't think that there is any danger of the lot being sold to a pawnbroker or a metal-dealer, so that we are running very little real risk in not advertising the loss."

"Yes; probably it is as well," replied Carrados. "Is there anything that Mr. Brickwill wishes me to do?"

"Only this, sir; if you are offered a suspicious lot of Greek coins, or hear of them, would you have a look—I mean ascertain whether they are likely to be ours, and if you think they are, communicate with us and Scotland Yard at once."

"Certainly," replied the blind man. "Tell Mr. Brickwill that he can rely on me if any indication comes my way. Convey my regrets to him and tell him that I feel the loss quite as a personal one. . . . I don't think that you and I have met as yet, Mr. Brebner?"

"No, sir," said the voice diffidently, "but I have looked forward to the pleasure. Perhaps this unfortunate business will bring me an introduction."

"You are very kind," was Carrados's acknowledgment of the compliment. "Any time . . . I was going to say that perhaps you don't know my weakness, but I have spent many pleasant hours over your wonderful collection. That ensures the personal element. Good-bye."

Carrados was really disturbed by the loss although his concern was tempered by the reflection that the coins would inevitably in the end find their way back to the Museum. That their restitution might

involve ransom to the extent of several thousand pounds was the least poignant detail of the situation. The one harrowing thought was that the booty might, through stress or ignorance, find its way into the melting-pot. That dreadful contingency, remote but insistent, was enough to affect the appetite of the blind enthusiast.

He was expecting Inspector Beedel, who would be full of his own case, but he could not altogether dismiss the aspects of possibility that Brebner's communication opened before his mind. He was still concerned with the chances of destruction and a very indifferent companion for Greatorex, who alone sat with him, when Parkinson presented himself. Dinner was over, but Carrados had remained rather longer than his custom, smoking his mild Turkish cigarette in silence.

"A lady wishes to see you, sir. She said you would not know her name, but that her business would interest you."

The form of message was sufficiently unusual to take the attention of both men.

"You don't know her, of course, Parkinson?" inquired his master.

For just a second the immaculate Parkinson seemed tongue-tied. Then he delivered himself in his most ceremonial strain.

"I regret to say that I cannot claim the advantage, sir," he replied.

"Better let me tackle her, sir," suggested Greatorex with easy confidence. "It's probably a sub."

The sportive offer was declined by a smile and a shake of the head. Carrados turned to his attendant.

"I shall be in the study, Parkinson. Show her there in three minutes. You stay and have another cigarette, Greatorex. By that time she will either have gone or have interested me."

In three minutes' time Parkinson threw open the study door.

"The lady, sir," he announced.

Could he have seen, Carrados would have received the impression of a plainly, almost dowdily dressed young woman of buxom figure. She wore a light veil, but it was ineffective in concealing the unattraction of the face beneath. The features were swart and the upper lip darkened with the more than incipient moustache of the southern brunette. Worse remained, for a disfiguring rash had assailed patches of her skin. As she entered she swept the room and its occupant with a quiet but comprehensive survey.

"Please take a chair, madame. You wish to see me?"

The ghost of a demure smile flickered about her mouth as she complied, and in that moment her face seemed less uncomely. Her eye lingered for a moment on a cabinet above the desk, and one might have noticed that her eye was very bright. Then she replied.

"You are Signor Carrados, in—in the person?"

Carrados made his smiling admission and changed his position a fraction—possibly to catch her curiously pitched voice the better.

"The great collector of the antiquities?"

"I do collect a little," he admitted guardedly.

"You will forgive me, Signor, if my language is not altogether good. When I live at Naples with my mother we let boardings, chiefly to Inglish and Amerigans. I pick up the words, but since I marry and go to live in Calabria my Inglish has gone all red—no, no, you say, rusty. Yes, that is it; quite rusty."

"It is excellent," said Carrados. "I am sure that we shall understand one another perfectly."

The lady shot a penetrating glance, but the blind man's expression was merely suave and courteous. Then she continued:

"My husband is of name Ferraja—Michele Ferraja. We have a vineyard and a little property near Forenzana." She paused to examine the tips of her gloves for quite an appreciable moment. "Signor," she burst out, with some vehemence, "the laws of my country are not good at all."

"From what I hear on all sides," said Carrados, "I am afraid that your country is not alone."

"There is at Forenzana a poor labourer, Gian Verde of name," continued the visitor, dashing volubly into her narrative. "He is one day digging in the vineyard, the vineyard of my husband, when his spade strikes itself upon an obstruction. 'Aha,' says Gian, 'what have we here?' and he goes down upon his knees to see. It is an oil jar of red earth, Signor, such as was anciently used, and in it is filled with silver money.

"Gian is poor, but he is wise. Does he call upon the authorities? No, no, he understands that they are all corrupt. He

carries what he has found to my husband, for he knows him to be a man of great honour.

"My husband also is of brief decision. His mind is made up. 'Gian,' he says, 'keep your mouth shut. This will be to your ultimate profit.' Gian understands, for he can trust my husband. He makes a sign of mutual implication. Then he goes back to the spade digging.

"My husband understands a little of these things but not enough. We go to the collections of Messina and Naples and even Rome and there we see other pieces of silver money, similar, and learn that they are of great value. They are of different sizes, but most would cover a lira and of the thickness of two. On the one side imagine the great head of a pagan deity; on the other—oh, so many things I cannot remember what." A gesture of circumferential despair indicated the hopeless variety of design.

"A biga or quadriga of mules?" suggested Carrados. "An eagle carrying off a hare, a figure flying with a wreath, a trophy of arms? Some of those, perhaps?"

"*Si, si bene*," cried Madame Ferraja. "You understand, I perceive, Signor. We are very cautious, for on every side is extortion and unjust law. See, it is even forbidden to take these things out of the country, yet if we try to dispose of them at home they will be seized and we punished, for they are *tesoro trovato*, what you call treasure troven, and belonging to the State—these coins which the industry of Gian discovered and which had lain for so long in the ground of my husband's vineyard."

"So you brought them to England?"

"*Si*, Signor. It is spoken of as a land of justice and rich nobility who buy these things at the highest prices. Also my speaking a little of the language would serve us here."

"I suppose you have the coins for disposal then? You can show them to me?"

"My husband retains them. I will take you, but you must first give *parola d'onore* of an English Signor not to betray us, or to speak of the circumstance to another."

Carrados had already foreseen this eventuality and decided to accept it. Whether a promise exacted on the plea of treasure trove would bind him to respect the despoilers of the British Museum was a point for subsequent consideration. Prudence demanded that he should investigate the offer at once and to cavil over Madame Ferraja's conditions would be fatal to that object. If the coins were, as there seemed little reason to doubt, the proceeds of the robbery, a modest ransom might be the safest way of preserving irreplaceable treasures, and in that case Carrados could offer his services as the necessary intermediary.

"I give you the promise you require, Madame," he accordingly declared.

"It is sufficient," assented Madame. "I will now take you to the spot. It is necessary that you alone should accompany me, for my husband is so distraught in this country, where he understands not a word of what is spoken, that his poor spirit would cry, 'We are surrounded!' if he saw two strangers approach the house. Oh, he is become most dreadful in his anxiety, my husband. Imagine only, he keeps on the fire a cauldron of molten lead and he would not hesitate to plunge into it this treasure and obliterate its existence if he imagined himself endangered."

"So," speculated Carrados inwardly. "A likely precaution for a simple vine-grower of Calabria! Very well," he assented aloud, "I will go with you alone. Where is the place?"

Madame Ferraja searched in the ancient purse that she discovered in her rusty handbag and produced a scrap of paper.

"People do not understand sometimes my way of saying it," she explained. "*Sette*, Herringbone——"

"May I——?" said Carrados, stretching out his hand. He took the paper and touched the writing with his finger-tips. "Oh yes, Seven, Heronsbourne Place. That is on the edge of Heronsbourne Park, is it not?" He transferred the paper casually to his desk as he spoke and stood up. "How did you come, Madame Ferraja?"

Madame Ferraja followed the careless action with a discreet smile that did not touch her voice.

"By motor bus—first one then another, inquiring at every turning. Oh, but it was interminable," sighed the lady.

"My driver is off for the evening—I did not expect to be going out—but I will 'phone up a taxi and it will be at the gate as soon as we are." He dispatched the message and then, turning to the house telephone, switched on to Greatorex.

" I'm just going round to Heronsbourne Park," he explained. " Don't stay, Greatorex, but if anyone calls expecting to see me, you can say that I don't anticipate being away more than an hour."

¶

PARKINSON was hovering about the hall. With quite novel officiousness he pressed upon his master a succession of articles that were not required. Over this usually complacent attendant the unattractive features of Madame Ferraja appeared to exercise a stealthy fascination, for a dozen times the lady detected his eyes questioning her face and a dozen times he looked guiltily away again. But his incongruities could not delay for more than a few minutes the opening of the door.

" I do not accompany you, sir ? " he inquired, with the suggestion plainly tendered in his voice that it would be much better if he did.

" Not this time, Parkinson."

" Very well, sir. Is there any particular address to which we can telephone in case you are required, sir ? "

" Mr. Greatorex has instructions."

Parkinson stood aside, his resources exhausted. Madame Ferraja laughed a little mockingly as they walked down the drive.

" Your man-servant thinks I may eat you, Signor Carrados," she declared vivaciously.

Carrados, who held the key of his usually exact attendant's perturbation—for he himself had recognised in Madame Ferraja the angelic Nina Brun, of the Sicilian tetradrachm incident, from the moment she opened her mouth—admitted to himself the humour of her audacity. But it was not until half-an-hour later that enlightenment rewarded Parkinson. Inspector Beedel had just arrived and was speaking with Greatorex when the conscientious valet, who had been winnowing his memory in solitude, broke in upon them, more distressed than either had ever seen him in his life before, and with the breathless introduction : " It was the ears, sir ! I have her ears at last ! " poured out his tale of suspicion, recognition and his present fears.

In the meanwhile the two objects of his concern had reached the gate as the summoned taxicab drew up.

" Seven Heronsbourne Place," called Carrados to the driver.

" No, no," interposed the lady, with decision, " let him stop at the beginning of the street. It is not far to walk. My husband would be on the verge of distraction if he thought in the dark that it was the arrival of the police—who knows ? "

" Brackedge Road, opposite the end of Heronsbourne Place," amended Carrados.

Heronsbourne Place had the reputation, among those who were curious in such matters, of being the most reclusive residential spot inside the four-mile circle. To earn that distinction it was, needless to say, a cul-de-sac. It bounded one side of Heronsbourne Park but did not at any point of its length give access to that pleasance. It was entirely devoted to unostentatious little houses something between the villa and the cottage, some detached and some in pairs, but all possessing the endowment of larger, more umbrageous gardens than can generally be secured within the radius. The local house agent described them as " delightfully old-world " or " completely modernised," according to the requirement of the applicant.

The cab was dismissed at the corner and Madame Ferraja guided her companion along the silent and deserted way. She had begun to talk with renewed animation, but her ceaseless chatter only served to emphasise to Carrados the one fact that it was contrived to disguise.

" I am not causing you to miss the house with looking after me—Number Seven, Madame Ferraja ? " he interposed.

" No, certainly," she replied readily. " It is a little farther. The numbers are from the other end. But we are there. *Ecco !* "

She stopped at a gate and opened it, still guiding him. They passed into a garden, moist and sweet-scented with the distillate odours of a dewy evening. As she turned to relatch the gate the blind man endeavoured politely to anticipate her. Between them his hat fell to the ground.

" My clumsiness," he apologised, recovering it from the step. " My old impulses and my present helplessness, alas, Madame Ferraja ! "

" One learns prudence by experience," said Madame sagely. She was scarcely to know, poor lady, that even as she uttered this trite aphorism, under cover of darkness and his hat, Mr. Carrados had just ruined his signet ring by blazoning a golden " 7 "

upon her garden step to establish its identity if need be. A cul-de-sac that numbered from the closed end seemed to demand some investigation.

"Seldom," he replied to her remark. "One goes on taking risks. So we are there?"

¶

MADAME FERRAJA opened the front door with a latchkey. She dropped the latch and led Carrados forward along the narrow hall. The room they entered was at the back of the house, and from the position of the road it therefore overlooked the park. Again the door was locked behind them.

"The celebrated Mr. Carrados!" announced Madame Ferraja, with a sparkle of triumph in her voice. She waved her hand towards a lean, dark man who had stood beside the door as they entered. "My husband."

"Beneath our poor roof in the most fraternal manner," commented the dark man, in the same derisive spirit. "But it is wonderful."

"The even more celebrated Monsieur Dompierre, unless I am mistaken?" retorted Carrados blandly. "I bow on our first real meeting."

"You knew!" exclaimed the Dompierre of the earlier incident incredulously. "Stoker, you were right and I owe you a hundred lire. Who recognised you, Nina?"

"How should I know?" demanded the real Madame Dompierre crossly. "This blind man himself, by chance."

"You pay a poor compliment to your charming wife's personality to imagine that one could forget her so soon," put in Carrados. "And you a Frenchman, Dompierre!"

"You knew, Monsieur Carrados," reiterated Dompierre, "and yet you ventured here. You are either a fool or a hero."

"An enthusiast—it is the same thing as both," interposed the lady. "What did I tell you? What did it matter if he recognised? You see?"

"Surely you exaggerate, Monsieur Dompierre," contributed Carrados. "I may yet pay tribute to your industry. Perhaps I regret the circumstance and the necessity, but I am here to make the best of it. Let me see the things Madame has spoken of and then we can consider the detail of their price, either for myself or on behalf of others."

There was no immediate reply. From Dompierre came a saturnine chuckle and from Madame Dompierre a titter that accompanied a grimace. For one of the rare occasions in his life Carrados found himself wholly out of touch with the atmosphere of the situation. Instinctively he turned his face towards the other occupant of the room, the man addressed as "Stoker," whom he knew to be standing near the window.

"This unfortunate business *has* brought me an introduction," said a familiar voice.

For one dreadful moment the universe stood still round Carrados. Then, with the crash and grind of overwhelming mental tumult, the whole strategy revealed itself, like the sections of a gigantic puzzle falling into place before his eyes.

There had been no robbery at the British Museum! That plausible concoction was as fictitious as the intentionally transparent tale of treasure trove. Carrados recognised now how ineffective the one device would have been without the other in drawing him—how convincing the two together—and while smarting at the humiliation of his plight he could not restrain a dash of admiration at the ingenuity—the accurately conjectured line of inference—of the plot. It was again the familiar artifice of the cunning pitfall masked by the clumsily contrived trap just beyond it. And straightway into it he had blundered!

"And this," continued the same voice, "is Carrados, Max Carrados, upon whose perspicuity a government—only the present government, let me in justice say—depends to outwit the undesirable alien! My country; O my country!"

"Is it really Monsieur Carrados?" inquired Dompierre in polite sarcasm. "Are you sure, Nina, that you have not brought a man from Scotland Yard instead?"

"*Basta!* he is here; what more do you want? Do not mock the poor sightless gentleman," answered Madame Dompierre, in doubtful sympathy.

"That is exactly what I was wondering," ventured Carrados mildly. "I am here—what more do you want? Perhaps you, Mr. Stoker——?"

"Excuse me. 'Stoker' is a mere colloquial appellation based on a trifling incident of my career in connection with a disabled liner. The title illustrates the childish weakness of the criminal classes for nicknames, together with their pitiable baldness

of invention. My real name is Montmorency, Mr. Carrados—Eustace Montmorency."

"Thank you, Mr. Montmorency," said Carrados gravely. "We are on opposite sides of the table here to-night, but I should be proud to have been with you in the stokehold of the *Benvenuto*."

"That was pleasure," muttered the Englishman. "This is business."

"Oh, quite so," agreed Carrados. "So far I am not exactly complaining. But I think it is high time to be told—and I address myself to you—why I have been decoyed here and what your purpose is."

Mr. Montmorency turned to his accomplice.

"Dompierre," he remarked, with great clearness, "why the devil is Mr. Carrados kept standing?"

"Ah, oh, heaven!" exclaimed Madame Dompierre with tragic resignation, and flung herself down on a couch.

"*Scusi*," grinned the lean man, and with burlesque grace he placed a chair for their guest's acceptance.

"Your curiosity is natural," continued Mr. Montmorency, with a cold eye towards Dompierre's antics, "although I really think that by this time you ought to have guessed the truth. In fact, I don't doubt that you have guessed, Mr. Carrados, and that you are only endeavouring to gain time. For that reason—because it will perhaps convince you that we have nothing to fear—I don't mind obliging you."

"Better hasten," murmured Dompierre uneasily.

"Thank you, Bill," said the Englishman, with genial effrontery. "I won't fail to report your intelligence to the Rasojo. Yes, Mr. Carrados, as you have already conjectured, it is the affair of the Countess X. to which you owe this inconvenience. You will appreciate the compliment that underlies your temporary seclusion, I am sure. When circumstances favoured our plans and London became the inevitable place of meeting, you and you alone stood in the way. We guessed that you would be consulted and we frankly feared your intervention. You were consulted. We know that Inspector Beedel visited you two days ago and he has no other case in hand. Your quiescence for just three days had to be obtained at any cost. So here you are."

"I see," assented Carrados. "And having got me here, how do you propose to keep me?"

"Of course that detail has received consideration. In fact we secured this furnished house solely with that in view. There are three courses before us. The first, quite pleasant, hangs on your acquiescence. The second, more drastic, comes into operation if you decline. The third—but really, Mr. Carrados, I hope you won't oblige me even to discuss the third. You will understand that it is rather objectionable for me to contemplate the necessity of two able-bodied men having to use even the smallest amount of physical compulsion towards one who is blind and helpless. I hope you will be reasonable and accept the inevitable."

"The inevitable is the one thing that I invariably accept," replied Carrados. "What does it involve?"

"You will write a note to your secretary explaining that what you have learned at Seven, Heronsbourne Place makes it necessary for you to go immediately abroad for a few days. By the way, Mr. Carrados, although this is Heronsbourne Place, it is *not* Number Seven."

"Dear, dear me," sighed the prisoner. "You seem to have had me at every turn, Mr. Montmorency."

"An obvious precaution. The wider course of giving you a different street altogether we rejected as being too risky in getting you here. To continue: To give conviction to the message you will direct your man Parkinson to follow by the first boat-train to-morrow, with all the requirements for a short stay, and put up at Mascot's as usual, awaiting your arrival there."

"Very convincing," agreed Carrados. "Where shall I be in reality?"

"In a charming though rather isolated bungalow on the south coast. Your wants will be attended to. There is a boat. You can row or fish. You will be run down by motor-car and brought back to your own gate. It's really very pleasant for a few days. I've often stayed there myself."

"Your recommendation carries weight. Suppose, for curiosity, that I decline?"

"You will still go there, but your treatment will be commensurate with your behaviour. The car to take you is at this moment waiting in a convenient spot on the other side of the park. We shall go down the garden at the back, cross the park and put you into the car—anyway."

" And if I resist ? "

The man whose pleasantry it had been to call himself Eustace Montmorency shrugged his shoulders.

" Don't be a fool," he said tolerantly. " You know who you are dealing with and the kind of risks we run. If you call out or endanger us at a critical point we shall not hesitate to silence you effectively."

¶

THE blind man knew that it was no idle threat. In spite of the cloak of humour and fantasy thrown over the proceedings, he was in the power of coolly desperate men. The window was curtained and shuttered against sight and sound, the door behind him locked. Possibly at that moment a revolver threatened him ; certainly weapons lay within reach of both his keepers.

" Tell me what to write," he asked, with capitulation in his voice.

Dompierre twirled his mustachios in relieved approval. Madame laughed from her place on the couch and picked up a book, watching Montmorency over the cover of its pages. As for that gentleman, he masked his satisfaction by the practical business of placing on the table before Carrados the accessories of the letter.

" Put into your own words the message that I outlined just now."

" Perhaps to make it altogether natural I had better write on a page of the notebook that I always use," suggested Carrados.

" Do you wish to make it natural ? " demanded Montmorency, with latent suspicion.

" If the miscarriage of your plan is to result in my head being knocked—yes, I do," was the reply.

" Good ! " chuckled Dompierre, and sought to avoid Mr. Montmorency's cold glance by turning on the electric table-lamp for the blind man's benefit. Madame Dompierre laughed shrilly.

" Thank you, Monsieur," said Carrados, " you have done quite right. What is light to you is warmth to me—heat, energy, inspiration. Now to business."

He took out the pocket-book he had spoken of and leisurely proceeded to flatten it down upon the table before him. As his tranquil, pleasant eyes ranged the room meanwhile it was hard to believe that the shutters of an impenetrable darkness lay between them and the world. They rested for a moment on the two accomplices who stood beyond the table, picked out Madame Dompierre lolling on the sofa on his right, and measured the proportions of the long, narrow room. They seemed to note the positions of the window at the one end and the door almost at the other, and even to take into account the single pendent electric light which up till then had been the sole illuminant.

" You prefer pencil ? " asked Montmorency.

" I generally use it for casual purposes. But not," he added, touching the point critically, " like this."

Alert for any sign of retaliation, they watched him take an insignificant penknife from his pocket and begin to trim the pencil. Was there in his mind any mad impulse to force conclusions with that puny weapon ? Dompierre worked his face into a fiercer expression and touched reassuringly the handle of his knife. Montmorency looked on for a moment, then, whistling softly to himself, turned his back on the table and strolled towards the window, avoiding Madame Nina's pursuant eye.

Then, with overwhelming suddenness, it came, and in its form altogether unexpected.

Carrados had been putting the last strokes to the pencil, whittling it down upon the table. There had been no hasty movement, no violent act to give them warning ; only the little blade had pushed itself nearer and nearer to the electric light cord lying there . . . and suddenly and instantly the room was plunged into absolute darkness.

" To the door, Dom ! " shouted Montmorency in a flash. " I am at the window. Don't let him pass and we are all right."

" I am here," responded Dompierre from the door.

" He will not attempt to pass," came the quiet voice of Carrados from across the room. " You are now all exactly where I want you. You are both covered. If either moves an inch, I fire—and remember that I shoot by sound, not sight."

" But—but what does it mean ? " stammered Montmorency, above the despairing wail of Madame Dompierre.

" It means that we are now on equal terms—three blind men in a dark room. The numerical advantage that you possess is counterbalanced by the fact that you are out of your element—I am in mine."

" Dom," whispered Montmorency across the dark space, " strike a match. I have none."

" I would not, Dompierre, if I were you," advised Carrados, with a short laugh. " It might be dangerous." At once his voice seemed to leap into a passion. " Drop that matchbox," he cried. " You are standing on the brink of your grave, you fool! Drop it, I say; let me hear it fall."

A breath of thought—almost too short to call a pause—then a little thud of surrender sounded from the carpet by the door. The two conspirators seemed to hold their breath.

" That is right." The placid voice once more resumed its sway. " Why cannot things be agreeable? I hate to have to shout, but you seem far from grasping the situation yet. Remember that I do not take the slightest risk. Also please remember, Mr. Montmorency, that the action even of a hair-trigger automatic scrapes slightly as it comes up. I remind you of that for your own good, because if you are so ill-advised as to think of trying to pot me in the dark, that noise gives me a fifth of a second start of you. Do you by any chance know Zinghi's in Mercer Street? "

" The shooting gallery? " asked Mr. Montmorency a little sulkily.

" The same. If you happen to come through this alive and are interested you might ask Zinghi to show you a target of mine that he keeps. Seven shots at twenty yards, the target indicated by four watches, none of them so loud as the one you are wearing. He keeps it as a curiosity."

" I wear no watch," muttered Dompierre, expressing his thought aloud.

" No, Monsieur Dompierre, but you wear a heart, and that not on your sleeve," said Carrados. " Just now it is quite as loud as Mr. Montmorency's watch. It is more central, too—I shall not have to allow any margin. That is right, breathe naturally "—for the unhappy Dompierre had given a gasp of apprehension. " It does not make any difference to me, and after a time holding one's breath becomes really painful."

" Monsieur," declared Dompierre earnestly, " there was no intention of submitting you to injury, I swear. This Englishman did but speak within his hat. At the most extreme you would have been but bound and gagged. Take care: killing is a dangerous game."

" For you—not for me," was the bland rejoinder. " If you kill me you will be hanged for it. If I kill you I shall be honourably acquitted. You can imagine the scene—the sympathetic court—the recital of your villainies—the story of my indignities. Then with stumbling feet and groping hands the helpless blind man is led forward to give evidence. Sensation! No, no, it isn't really fair but I can kill you both with absolute certainty and Providence will be saddled with all the responsibility. Please don't fidget with your feet, Monsieur Dompierre. I know that you aren't moving, but one is liable to make mistakes."

" Before I die," said Montmorency—and for some reason laughed unconvincingly in the dark—" before I die, Mr Carrados, I should really like to know what has happened to the light. That, surely, isn't Providence? "

" Would it be ungenerous to suggest that you are trying to gain time? You ought to know what has happened. But as it may satisfy you that I have nothing to fear from delay, I don't mind telling you. In my hand was a sharp knife—contemptible, you were satisfied, as a weapon; beneath my nose the ' flex ' of the electric lamp. It was only necessary for me to draw the one across the other and the system was short-circuited. Every lamp on that fuse is cut off and in the distributing-box in the hall you will find a burned-out wire. You, perhaps—but Monsieur Dompierre's experience in plating ought to have put him up to simple electricity."

" How did you know that there is a distributing-box in the hall? " asked Dompierre, with dull resentment.

" My dear Dompierre, why beat the air with futile questions? " replied Max Carrados. " Whatever does it matter? Have it in the cellar if you like."

" True," interposed Montmorency. " The only thing that need concern us now——"

" But it is in the hall—nine feet high," muttered Dompierre in bitterness. " Yet he, this blind man——"

" The only thing that need concern us," repeated the Englishman, severely ignoring the interruption, " is what you intend doing in the end, Mr. Carrados? "

" The end is a little difficult to foresee," was the admission. " So far, I am all for maintaining the *status quo*. Will the first

grey light of morning find us still in this impasse? No, for between us we have condemned the room to eternal darkness. Probably about daybreak Dompierre will drop off to sleep and roll against the door, I, unfortunately mistaking his intention, will send a bullet through—— Pardon, Madame, I should have remembered—but pray don't move."

"I protest, Monsieur——"

"Don't protest; just sit still. Very likely it will be Mr. Montmorency who will fall off to sleep the first after all."

"Then we will anticipate that difficulty," said the one in question, speaking with renewed decision. "We will play the last hand with our cards upon the table if you like. Nina, Mr. Carrados will not injure you whatever happens—be sure of that. When the moment comes you will rise——"

"One word," put in Carrados with determination. "My position is precarious and I take no risks. As you say, I cannot injure Madame Dompierre, and you two men are therefore my hostages for her good behaviour. If she rises from the couch you, Dompierre, fall. If she advances another step Mr. Montmorency follows you."

"Do nothing rash, *carissima*," urged her husband, with passionate solicitude. "You might get hit in place of me. We will yet find a better way."

"You dare not, Mr. Carrados!" flung out Montmorency, for the first time beginning to show signs of wear in his duel of the temper. "He dare not, Dompierre. In cold blood and unprovoked! No jury would acquit you!"

"Another who fails to do you justice, Madame Nina," said the blind man with ironic gallantry. "The action might be a little high-handed, one admits, but when you, appropriately clothed and in your right complexion, stepped into the witness-box and I said: 'Gentlemen of the jury, what is my crime? That I made Madame Dompierre a widow!' can you doubt their gratitude and my acquittal? Truly my countrymen are not all bats or monks, Madame."

Dompierre was breathing with perfect freedom now, while from the couch came the sounds of stifled emotion, but whether the lady was involved in a paroxysm of sobs or of laughter it would be very difficult to determine.

¶

IT was perhaps an hour after the flourish of the introduction with which Madame Dompierre had closed the door of the trap upon the blind man's entrance.

The minutes had passed, but the situation remained unchanged, though the ingenuity of certainly two of the occupants of the room had been tormented into shreds to discover a means of turning it to their advantage. So far the terrible omniscience of the blind man in the dark and the respect for his marksmanship with which his coolness had inspired them, dominated the group. But one strong card yet remained to be played, and at last the moment came upon which the conspirators had pinned their despairing hopes.

There was the sound of movement in the hall outside, not the first about the house, but towards the new complication Carrados had been strangely unobservant. True, Montmorency had talked rather loudly, to carry over the dangerous moments. But now there came an unmistakable step and to the accomplices it could only mean one thing. Montmorency was ready on the instant.

"Down, Dom!" he cried, "throw yourself down! Break in, Guido. Break in the door. We are held up!"

There was an immediate response. The door, under the pressure of a human battering-ram, burst open with a crash. On the threshold the intruders—four or five in number—stopped starkly for a moment, held in astonishment by the extraordinary scene that the light from the hall, and of their own bull's-eyes, suddenly revealed.

Flat on their faces, to present the least possible surface to Carrados's aim, Dompierre and Montmorency lay extended beside the window and behind the door. On the couch, with her head buried beneath the cushions, Madame Dompierre sought to shut out the sight and sound of violence. Carrados—Carrados had not moved, but with arms resting on the table and fingers placidly locked together, he smiled benignly on the new arrivals. His attitude, compared with the extravagance of those around him, gave the impression of a complacent modern deity presiding over some grotesque ceremonial of pagan worship.

"So, Inspector, you could not wait for me, after all?" was his greeting.

God Bless You!

Concerning two ways of begging

By W. H. RIEHL

A classic in his own country W. H. Riehl was a brilliant Editor of literary journals in Munich, and also won fame as an historian. He wrote many notable stories. The one following perhaps most perfectly illustrates the charm and peculiarity of his genius. He died in 1897.

FOR many a long year "Crooked Hans" had lain in the south porch of Augsburg Cathedral and begged. He had no surname, and for that matter knew nothing about his parents; for a beggar can dispense with ancestors, he stands on his own merits, and all benevolent persons are his uncles and cousins. No more did Hans know how old he was; yet he could estimate his age roughly. For as a little urchin he had been one of the crowd which saw Ulrich Schwarz, burgomaster of Augsburg, hanged in his velvet councillor's gown; on that occasion Hans had sat astride a wall, but, at the moment when the burgomaster fell from the ladder, he, too, lost his balance and fell down, broke his leg, and, when it mended badly, became by name and nature Crooked Hans. Later on his crooked leg procured him his license to beg and his fine place in the Cathedral porch. Now, they wrote 1478 when the wicked burgomaster came to the gallows, so Crooked Hans estimated that he himself must have been born somewhere about 1470.

Day in and day out, year after year, he kept his place warm, and had ended by sitting the stone at the back, in the left-hand corner of the porch, quite smooth; the old century had set and the new one risen, the Emperor Frederick had died, and the Enperor Maximilian, too, good times and bad had come and gone: Crooked Hans remained as firmly on his stone as if he were one of the statues which adorned the porch round and round. He had gradually become old, and yet seemed always the same, an object of pity in appearance and gesture, but inwardly heartily content with his calling, which he held to be the pleasantest in the world, and with his stone, which was without question the most distinguished and most lucrative beggar's pitch in the whole imperial city

Now, it came about that the beggar, in his old age, found a treasure which many a rich man seeks after in vain, namely a human creature whom he could love as if he had been the child of his own body, a young friend and fellow-beggar as heartily content with their common calling as himself, a friend in whom his own youth bloomed for a second time. This friend was called Veit Roluf.

When Crooked Hans made his acquaintance, Veit was some sixteen years old, and Hans had scented the lad's rich talent for begging in a twinkling. For, young though the work-shy lad still was, he had already contrived to cheat the whole town into believing that he had a palsied arm and a horribly mutilated right hand. With praiseworthy art, he held his arm always stiff, and drew his shoulder up slantingly, as if the palsy extended into his neck. The sore hand, however, was thickly bandaged in dirty cloths, and, if anyone desired to see the hurt, Veit would begin to undo one bloody rag after another, with such a heart-rending moaning that the other was sure to have had enough before so much as the half of the wrappings had come off. Veit Roluf had thrown dust in the eyes of the beggars' beadle himself, and had cozened him out of the metal badge in virtue of which he could now declare himself a beggar officially tolerated on account of severe infirmities.

All true friendship has its root in the mutual supplementing of two differently constituted, yet congenial, natures. So it was in the case of these two beggars. Hans was crooked and Veit was palsied, thus each was a cripple. But the old man's crooked leg was nature, and the young man's palsied arm was art. Hans therefore considered that in this respect he had the advantage, he was more sure of his infirmity, and thus his vocation rested on a more solid basis. The

constable sometimes stops sturdy beggars from plying their trade. As against this, Veit had another and an enviable advantage, he was a child of Augsburg city; and a native beggar was permanently tolerated, while the incomers, about every other year, were expelled from the town. Since even Crooked Hans himself did not know where he had been born, the same fate would have overtaken him long ago, had he not happened to have fallen down and become a cripple at a moment of such historic importance, and in sight of the whole town. They left him unmolested as a living testimony of that memorable day, and at last Hans used to aver that he might be no native, yet he was no stranger either, but an adopted child of the imperial city of Augsburg.

Old Hans, however, could imagine no profounder manifestation of his affection for young Veit than to take him into training with the utmost conscientiousness: he meant to make him a beggar-virtuoso without equal; gifts and graces such as Veit Roluf possessed must not be lost to his native city, nor vanish in mere bungling and dilettantism. For the only representation of a perfect man which Hans could form in his mind was the perfect beggar.

Accordingly Hans revealed ungrudgingly to young Veit all the secrets of the higher beggary, as he had thought them out for himself and found them stand the proof during his long experience. He would not have betrayed them to any other creature, but love opened his mouth. Above all things, however, he sought to inspire his friend with a true professional pride, and to guard him against frittering away his talents on the lower branches of beggary.

"It would never do for you to become a wandering beggar, my son," he said in effect, "nor a cadger who goes about houses and lanes, and even the high roads: that is common vagrancy, and is not fit for the like of us. In every calling, the man with the most settled position has the solidest reputation, and I've been sitting these five-and-twenty years on this same stone. But, again, there are sitting beggars and sitting beggars: it depends on where they sit. They are people of no account who station themselves at town-gates and street-corners; it is a place in the church that makes a man really respectable. A skinner or shepherd is called Doctor because he cures the sick, and the Emperor's physician-in-ordinary himself does no more, but the step from colleged doctor to Doctor Skinner is not so great as the gulf between the settled church-beggar and the sitting street-beggar. The clergy is the first order, and, when all is said and done, the church-beggar belongs to the clergy, he is almost as good as a mendicant friar, only that he plies without vows and for his own hand.

Thus Hans proved most plainly that he belonged to the highest nobility of beggardom. But he was not content with that. With his way of it, he affirmed furthermore that, of this nobility, he held the highest post in the Roman Empire in fee; for that very stone, which he had sat smooth in the last five-and-twenty years, lay in a most peculiarly privileged position. For, when the bishops of Augsburg were adding the Gothic western choir to the ancient Roman structure of the Cathedral, a part of the Imperial highway lay right across their path. The city gave them permission to build upon this ground, its property, but retained the right of way from the south to the north porch, right through the church.

"And so," said Hans to his friend, "the stone on which I sit is episcopal, no doubt, but the ground on which the stone sits is held of the Emperor, and so I can call myself at once a princely and an immediate-imperial beggar. Only at midday, when the sun is too kind, I draw deeper back into the shade of the arch on to purely episcopal ground. But even this, in its turn, is an advantage which I have over my neighbour at the north porch, who possesses a place in other respects almost equally good, for he, too, begs on ground which is at once episcopal and immediately imperial, but he begs in the shade all the year round."

At this point Crooked Hans made a long pause, then continued with some emotion, "When I die, as I must do some day, you, my son, must be heir to my place. Of course we can't manage here in Augsburg has tey do at Cologne, where the beggars give their daughters a good place at a church as a dowry without any more ado; with us one has to climb the hill step by step. So do you take your place for the meantime at the little door at St. Anne's; the place is poor and does not bring in much, but still for a beginner it is not to be despised. Then, after a time you may perhaps move to the north porch of the Cathedral, for the beggar over there coughs straight on, so that I can hear it here on my stone: he's

not long for this world. But, once you have made your footing good yonder in the shade, you may easily shift over here to my place on the sunny side, if it one day pleases God to call me from this earthly beggar-hole to the south porch of His Heavenly Temple."

The old man had begun by speaking in his usual lachrymose tone, as if he were entreating alms, but he ended by crying in good earnest. Veit heard with sparkling eyes what a brilliant future was open to him, and said, half smiling, half weeping, "God bless you a thousandfold!" and pressed the hand of his fatherly friend.

And his inward exultation over the renown which his friend opened to him, soon drove away the sad thought that the summit of this renown was only to be attained on his friend's death. May a Crown Prince not look forward to his future sovereign calling with proud joy, although he knows that he will only mount to the throne through his father's death? Veit, too, felt like a Crown Prince at that moment. Begging he had wakened from the dreams of his infancy; beggar-urchins had been his playmates; among the beggar-folk the youth had found his friends and rivals; by beggar tricks, and nothing else, he had won their praise and admiration; no other way stood open to him in the world and the castes into which it was divided than the beggar's career. Why should he envy and emulate the rich merchants and tradesmen, seeing he could never in any case become their equal.

He gratefully followed the old man's advice, and seated himself at the little door of St. Anne's, and no copper was too worn, no crust too dry, for him to accept. For the desire and craft of gain had more attraction for him than the gain itself. Every evening, however, he went to Crooked Hans to tell him the day's adventures, and then the old man's sparing praise rejoiced him even more than the desire of gain. Thus Veit was happy over his fine calling, and Hans was happy over Veit, and in all the Roman Empire there were probably no more contented beggars than the two friends.

II

AND yet, things turned out differently from what the two expected, and that for two weighty reasons.

For, in the first place, the resounding cough of the beggar at the north porch, so far from being a sign of consumption, was rather a proof of the unbroken soundness of his lungs. This cough, which deceived Crooked Hans himself, was just as consummate art as Veit Roluf's palsied arm, and so the coveted place was not vacant for a long time.

And, in the second place, the Reformation swept through Germany, especially through the German cities. So the indestructible man at the north porch did indeed vacate his place at last in the year 1537, though he was always coughing away with fresh vigour, but then the other church-beggars were expelled, too, and all the Catholic clergy as well, and the Cathedral became a Lutheran church. Crooked Hans followed the bishop, with his chapter and church-treasures, into exile at Dillingen—seeing that he reckoned himself a sort of living item in the inventory of the Cathedral treasure, he considered it beneath his dignity to flee elsewhere. Of course the two places now stood empty both at once, but no one ventured to reoccupy them; Veit Roluf, the nearest claimant, had been driven away long ago even from the humble church-door of St. Anne's: five years previously the Reformation had turned him out of his course as a settled church-beggar, and he was dragging out a poor and inglorious existence from door to door; for Lutheran begging was nowhere as good as Catholic had been.

It was a touching farewell between the two friends, when Crooked Hans, with his long occupancy and his more than three-score years, had now to take up the pilgrim's staff of the fugitive. While the young man lamented in despair over the increasing badness of the times, which no longer allowed even a beggar to earn his bread quietly and honourably, the old man was full of dignity and resignation. "Just you beg on quietly," he said; "remain true to your calling and to my teaching. In a little while we'll all be back again and sit firmer than ever on our chairs and stones. Whoever wishes to merit the highest honours of his calling must be prepared to suffer for it as well. Remember this, my son, at all times, and you will not forget Crooked Hans entirely. And now God protect you!"

Veit in fact did not forget his fatherly friend, and he kept mind of his lessons faithfully. But now, as the whole town had become Lutheran, he almost always got hard words and a scurvy dole, if he said, after his master's fashion, "God bless you

for the poor souls in Purgatory," so he ended by becoming Lutheran like the rest, dropped out the poor souls, did away with Purgatory, and thanked people with nothing but a curt " God bless you ! " Thereupon things went rather better again with him for a while.

At this same time a pestilence broke out in Augsburg. The hospitals became full, and there was a lack of nursing for the sick, who were infectious ; many attendants fled from the danger, others succumbed to the plague. Veit, who in these bad times could scarcely scrape his bare bread together by begging—for the rich people fled from the town,—was heartily tired of life and more than once had thoughts of making away with himself. He at last decided that the least sinful way of suicide would be to go into a pest-house as an attendant. So he offered himself for this service. To begin with, it is true, they boggled at the palsied beggar, but, since the help of *one* arm seemed always better than none at all, they took him on.

But scarcely had Veit found himself in the hospital, when a miracle was wrought upon him. The idle fellow, who hitherto had never known the taste of honest work, became as it were intoxicated by the thought that now he, too, was working like other people. While formerly it had been *he* who said " God bless you," now, all at once, he heard others—the sick, the convalescent, the dying—calling " God bless you " to *him*, and that not with the whining beggar-accent, but from the bottom of their overflowing hearts. Like a kindling beam it flashed through his soul that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And it was now that the miracle happened. Veit, who hitherto had never forgotten himself, had never moved his arm, and had counterfeited a stiff shoulder so artfully, in order to live in idleness and obtain by fraud the mercy of others, forgot himself now that he was showing mercy to others, and suddenly fell to with both arms, in the blessed excitement of work and compassion.

The hospital chaplain was astounded to observe how the palsied Veit was going about his business so actively, with sound limbs, and had thrown away the filthy rags in which his hand had been wrapped. But still more astounded was Veit himself when the chaplain called to him, " Why, Veit, what has become of your palsied arm ? "

Then only did the beggar notice how completely he had forgotten himself, and his palsy into the bargain, and started up as if from a dream, and looked at his arm, to see whether it was really palsied no longer. Then at last he answered, blushing up to his ears, " *One* arm is no use now in all this misery, so there is nothing for it but to use both." He said not another word, only fell to all the more vigorously in order to hide his confusion. And the chaplain, too, went away in silence.

But the tale of the sudden cure of palsied Veit soon spread all over the town, and, as the angels in Heaven find their especial joy over one sinner that repenteth, so all good people in Augsburg rejoiced most especially over Veit Roluf's miraculous cure. Palsied Veit had till then been a notorious vagabond, now he had become over night a popular hero. The hospital chaplain, who, with fine tact, had said nothing when Veit stood confused before him, subsequently talked all the more openly to others about Veit, and so managed that, after the speedy passage of the plague, the quondam beggar was retained at the hospital. Veit, however, continued to prove himself so useful that, in course of time, he rose to be master of the hospital, with free lodgings, food, fuel and light, a new coat on St. George's day and Michaelmas, and a kitchen-garden for fruit, lettuce and parsley, with some gulden in money besides.

But no one would think, to look at Veit now, that he had spent so long in idleness begging. His eye had become steadier, his gait more manly, he felt with just pride what it means to live in self-earned, assured comfort, respected by one's fellow-townsmen. Often and often he asked himself, " What will Crooked Hans say to it ? " For the sweetest thing about late-acquired honours, after all, is to be able to show the friends of our youth what fine fellows we have turned out, contrary to expectation. And Veit thought that Crooked Hans would surely beam with joy now, if he saw his friend and pupil in such high honour. Yet now and again he became hot all over, and doubted whether the dignity of hospital-master would appear quite the right thing after all to the proud episcopal and immediate-imperial beggar.

But now times changed again. The Protestant princes and cities had lost the game to the Emperor in the War of Schmalkalden ; on the 23rd of July, 1547, Charles V entered Augsburg with many troops, the burgomaster and council received

him, clad in black, on bended knees, and offered him four waggon-loads of wine as a welcome drink, and that same day the new Cardinal-Bishop Otto Truchsess, who meantime had been elected bishop at Dillingen in room of Bishop Christopher, who had died in exile, reconsecrated the Cathedral and most of the city-churches for Catholic worship.

Though the old bishop Christopher had not reascended his throne, Crooked Hans had returned again with the new bishop, and sat again for the first time on his stone when the renowned Michael Sidonius was preaching on the sacrifice of the Mass in the Cathedral.

As unchanged as if he had only gone away the previous day, the beggar, now well-nigh eighty years of age, sat in the south porch, and yet ten years of banishment lay behind him. There were three men whom all the people looked at that day, with particular admiration; the preacher, the Emperor, and the beggar. A living effigy, the old man sat there, not a gleam of joy or triumph flitted across his stony features; as if nothing had happened all that time, he uttered his prayers that day as he had done ten years before, stretched out his withered hand and murmured into his long white beard, "God bless you a thousandfold for the poor souls in Purgatory." Gifts were showered upon him so superabundantly that he could scarcely find where to bestow them.

In the afternoon Veit Roluf hastened to the Cathedral; he had heard that Crooked Hans was sitting there again; he scarcely knew how his feet bore him, he was in such a feverish tremor at approaching the moment of seeing his friend once more. While yet far off, he shouted loud greetings to his friend, and made signs, and rushed in stormy haste to the doorway. But there it was as if he had rushed up to a stone: the old man did not move; he let his rosary pass through his fingers, and kept on softly repeating his paternoster. Veit stepped in front of him, and put out his hand, and, with tears in his eyes, bade him a hearty welcome. At that the old man ceased for an instant. He looked up out of the corner of his eye, long and fixedly, at his former friend, and measured him slowly from head to foot:—it was a look of deepest compassion and deepest contempt. All else was dead in the old man, only his eye preserved a fire and a force which showed that his whole soul still lived, and in that soul all his pride and all his wrath.

Veit stood as if struck by lightning. He stammered excuses, he begged, he entreated, for so much as one kind word; the old man went on calmly repeating one paternoster after another, as if he were sitting on his stone there all alone, then, when he had said paternosters enough and Veit still continued to speak, he went on to Ave Maria's. Dumbfounded with shame and wrath, Veit at length slunk away. The old man appeared not to see it; he had only had *one* look for him, and that one he had given him.

III

VEIT understood the old man's look and his silence. He was well aware that Crooked Hans had not become childish, and had not been silent because his senses were dulled; and he also concluded quite correctly that he was angry with him not because of his defection from the old faith, but simply because of his defection from his old beggar's calling. Though he was now honoured more than he had ever dreamt of being, still the old beggar's look of contempt cut so deeply into his heart that it suddenly occurred to him that he had sunk lower than even the meanest beggar-urchin.

But that was only a passing doubt. Veit knew well enough that, inwardly and outwardly, he had become a better man.

One day he passed by the north porch of the Cathedral. The place was empty; the beggar with the cough had not returned from exile. "What is there to hinder me now from occupying the long-envied and coveted place?" thought Veit to himself, as he cast a woe-begone look at the desolate stance. He itched to set himself just once by way of experiment under the doorway. But he resisted the impulse; he looked at his decent coat and sound arm, and slunk on his way, shaking his head.

He made several fresh attempts to speak his old friend fair, he wanted to soften him by his unshaken fidelity, but Crooked Hans was unshaken, too; he looked friendly at each old acquaintance, and talked with him, but for the master he had no look and no word now.

Veit grew more melancholy every day. He could have torn his coat into beggar's rags, if only he could have ventured to say "God bless you" once again.

One day some business took him to the

neighbouring Schmutterthal, and on his way home he took the high road over the Sandberg. As he was climbing up the hill, some merchants from Ulm passed him with their waggons and pack-animals. They were taking it easy because of the hill; the place was so lonely, not a human being far or near, the merchants so near the end of a journey which was not altogether without danger; surely, in the gratitude of their hearts, they would be in the right mood now for giving a poor devil an alms. These and similar thoughts rushed intoxicatingly through Veit's head; the evening sun glowed so fair, the birds sang so sweetly; it was a lovely moment for begging. Before he knew rightly what he was about, he was standing by the roadside, bowing low, and holding out his hat to the merchants, with some unintelligible mumble. The merchants stared at him open-eyed. "Why, the fellow's almost better dressed than we are, and as fit and strong as can be, yet he's not ashamed to beg!" shouted one of the train, and they went on, thrusting him aside with withering contempt.

At that Veit came to himself again, as if he had received a douche of cold water, and felt fit to sink into the earth for shame. Yet—such an enigma is the human heart!—it was not because he had begged that he blushed, but because he had begged so clumsily *ill*. "It was the want of my palsied arm," he next thought, as he made his way slowly back to town; "if I had drawn my shoulder up stiff, as I used to, I should have been able to say 'God bless you' once again, just as in the old days!"

And, as he went, he tried and tried whether he could catch the trick of his palsied arm again. But the too conscious attempt failed, he could never get anything but a bungled palsied arm.

No, he had forgotten his old art completely, and could show nothing better than that quackery and dilettantism against which Crooked Hans had formerly warned him so strongly. He begged like a schoolboy, for he lacked the inspiration of faith in himself. But had he not become a master in other things, as compensation? He was called Master, of course; but was he one in the full sense of the word? It seemed to him just then as if the people reckoned him a mere untaught amateur in a master's duties, he even felt himself then as if he were simply making a swindling pretence of honest work, while all the time idleness and begging were his real, yet unfortunately his lost, avocation.

"Ah, if I could only beg properly again!" With this sigh he at last laid himself down to sleep. And every evening he repeated the same ejaculation to himself more devoutly, so devoutly at last that he sprang out of bed again, and ran through the streets in the twilight, and, when he met a strange gentleman at the Perlach, squeezed himself a little into the shadow of the tower and forthwith begged of him. The stranger, however, instead of putting his hand into his pocket, lifted his stick menacingly and exclaimed, "What, another runagate Lutheran heretic, who just asks for money without more ado, and does not so much as offer me a prayer for my poor soul?" Veit slipped very quietly back into the shadow. "The good old times are gone!" he lamented inwardly. "If I beg Catholic fashion to the next one I meet, he'll most likely hold by the Augsburg Confession and shake his stick at me because I don't beg Lutheranwise. The ground is giving way beneath me everywhere."

Next day, however, Veit was summoned before the hospital-chaplain, who took him sharply to task. For it was rumoured that the overseer was now and again going back to begging. Veit confessed without any reserve. To tell the truth, he had not really begged yet, but had only made a trial here and there to see if he could still do it. He had been smitten with a sort of home-sickness for begging, he could not understand it at all, a sort of woman's longing.

The chaplain forthwith prescribed the desired remedy, by dressing poor Veit down with a terrible lecture, and also by hinting very plainly at expulsion from office and livelihood.

Veit took the words to heart, and applied himself more quietly and industriously than ever to his work.

At that time a homeless girl was lying in the hospital, whom they had brought from some lodging-house sick of a fever. Although she looked somewhat uncivilised, and somewhat unwashed to begin with, still she was a very pretty wench with a bright eye and proud, defiant lips, not to mention that she was barely twenty years old. Veit took no particular notice of her, and, besides, to be staring at women was not his weakness. The girl got better, and was to leave the hospital the next day. Then Veit noticed that she was

sitting crying at her bedside. He asked what she wanted, and she answered, " I want my mother. She was still beside me when I lost my senses in the fever, but, when I came to myself in the hospital, she was gone.

Veit now asked about the lodging in which the sick girl had last been with her mother, and, when she named the " Flying Fish," a sudden light dawned on him. The " Flying Fish " was a beggars' ken, the girl a beggar-wench, and since there had been a great expulsion of stranger beggars from the town a few weeks before, the mother had in all likelihood been banished along with the rest.

At this discovery, Veit looked the girl closely in the face for the first time, and found that she was very beautiful. He inquired with interest about her fortunes, and it seemed to him that the reason why no girl had ever yet taken his fancy was simply that never yet had he seen a pretty beggar-girl. This one, now, was pretty, and a beggar, and so she took his fancy extraordinarily. Besides, she had a very pleasant and sensible view of the beggar's calling. " We are no common beggars, my mother and I," she said ; " we do not put out our hand to everybody. It is only where I see persons very happy or very sad, persons already made warm and tender, that I softly murmur my petition. For the joyful man gives gladly and of his fulness ; he will have partners of his happiness, be it only a dog or a beggar ; while the sad man would fain speak our Lord God fair by a rich alms, or else he thinks, ' Though I am so joyless yet you, poor beggar-girl, shall at least have a happy hour.' But I say, ' God bless you,' very woefully to the happy man, and very joyfully to the sad man, and so I touch the one and comfort the other."

Floating in marvellous dreams, Veit accompanied the child next day to the " Flying Fish," to help her to discover her mother's abode. But here he was quite superfluous. Though there were many people staying at the lodging-house, they got no information ; for the ragged folk mistrusted the intruder in the good coat, and Veit felt only too well that his presence did the girl more harm than help. If he had only been a beggar, too ! Still he saw to her being put up for the meantime.

But, when he went back shortly afterwards to the " Flying Fish," his fair one was up and away from the place with other beggar-folk. He followed her track as far as Friedberg and went another five leagues after her into Bavaria ; but he did not find her. If he had still been a beggar, she could hardly have escaped him ; the others of the guild, whom he met here and there, would certainly have showed him which way she had gone, instead of suspiciously evading his inquiries, nay, the girl would never have run away from him at all, but would have married him on the spot. He was like to despair at being no longer a beggar, and, tired and miserable, went back to the town.

There he paid no attention to the streets, and, before he was aware, he found himself before the north doorway of the Cathedral, at the very corner where the beggar with the eternal cough had formerly sat. The people were going in and out to evensong, and Veit remained standing like a sentinel and looking vacantly at the people and the stone images of the saints, and was quite unconscious that he was mechanically trying his palsied arm and murmuring now in a joyful, now in a sad, tone, " God bless you ! " and equally unconscious that many were eyeing him with smiles, and others reproachfully ; for he was not thinking now about his arm or the churchgoers, but about the beggar-wench who had said, " God bless you," so beautifully, and who would certainly not have run away from him, if only he had been still a beggar. But he was startled out of his dream with horrid suddenness by the loud bass of the verger, who wrathfully bade him begone.

Then Veit first realised how suspicious his posture in that seductive place was, and hastily took the nearest way out—the imperial highway—across the choir to the south porch. But there he saw a nine days' wonder : the stone was vacant, Crooked Hans was not to be seen ! This incredible fact caused him to forget all his own trouble in a moment : Hans must be dead or very ill ; for no other reason could have made him leave his stone at this hour. Veit hastened at once to the " Flying Fish " to learn from the lodging-house-keeper, who knew every beggar, what had happened.

He had guessed right. Crooked Hans had his den in a little back cottage on one of the branches of the Lech, where he had been lying for a week past, miserable and neglected, crippled by gout. " It's a bad job," said the lodging-house-keeper, " the old boy will be months before he can beg

again ; but, if he dies of hunger before then, of course he'll be no more use at begging after that."

IV

VEIT trembled with eagerness to help the forlorn old man immediately. But how? He certainly could not venture to cross his threshold; if he did so, Hans would very probably take a stroke of apoplexy in addition to his gout. Besides, he had to go back to the hospital first; for the evening bell was ringing. He had a very restless night; till twelve o'clock he could not sleep, because he was thinking over ways in which to help his friend and finding none, and after twelve o'clock he was still not asleep, because he was too overjoyed that he had found a way.

Early in the morning he was on his feet and hurrying to the hospital-chaplain's house, which was a good way off, for he needed his help for his plan. But at that same hour the chaplain was making for the hospital, and so the two met half-way in a little narrow lane.

" I was looking for you, Veit ! " exclaimed the chaplain.

" And I was looking for you ! " exclaimed Veit, almost simultaneously.

The chaplain was taken aback: Veit, usually so polite and modest, never once touched his cap, and flung those words at him exactly as if he had met some boon companion. So the reverend gentleman began with just as little ceremony, " Is it the thing, Veit, for you, the hospital-master, to be going into the ' Flying Fish with beggar-wenches, yes, and to be running all over the country after a beggar-wench and neglecting your duties? Is it the thing, for——"

" No, it's not the thing, your Reverence ; I know, I have done wrong," Veit interrupted him ; " but that is long past, that was yesterday, to-day is different, to-day I am another man, to-day I must beg, beg very well just this once, before I die——"

" Is it the thing," the chaplain meanwhile exclaimed, more thunderously than ever, " for you, the hospital-master, to station yourself like a beggar in the Cathedral porch, to the scandal of half the town, yes and have to be driven away by the Cathedral verger? Is it the thing for——"

And all the while, at the same time, as if in a duet, Veit kept calling, in a voice which also grew louder and louder, " No, no ; but that was yesterday, that is an old story ! Punish me afterwards, dismiss me, only first let me beg just *once ;* that's what was taking me to you, your Reverence, to get you to write my begging-letter for me ! "

By this time the chaplain was convinced that Veit had taken leave of his senses ; so he let him do the talking, and scanned his face sharply and inquiringly.

Veit, now that he thus had got a little more air, continued, with less impetuosity, " I confess that I begged wrong, begged badly, but now—" " You'll not beg at all," snapped the chaplain—" Now,—pray let me speak, your Reverence—now I know how I can beg well and truly once more in my lifetime." Then he told him about the sick and forsaken Hans, his fatherly friend and teacher, and how he could no longer beg and must die of hunger. He meant to beg for Hans at every house—no matter whether it was Lutheran or Catholic—not as a beggar, but as a sick-attendant and hospital-master, and, that the people might make no difficulty about believing him, he wanted a begging-letter from his chaplain.

" And are you doing this *only* for Crooked Han's sake? "

" Yes and no ! " responded honest Veit. " I'm doing it almost all for Hans, and only a little bit for myself. Hans must get all the money, and I must beg really *well*, just because it's for Hans. But I do not deny that, for my share, I have an almost childish delight in this begging. I know that I ought not to beg. But how delightful it was when I was still able to beg so innocently and so sincerely in my young days ; I should like to beg just once more in my life, and I have the finest reason for doing so now ;—it will certainly never occur again ! "

The chaplain was silent for a long time, and looked at the ground ; Veit trembled for an unfavourable reply. At last the other raised his face with a smile. " You are the master, and I am the chaplain, of the hospital, and, strange to say, we are both, as the saying goes, lying sick in the same hospital. In my younger years I used to be very fond of making German verses for weddings and christenings, for banquets and drinking-parties, and any other occasions where there was merry-making ; for my father was a weaver and a master-singer. But, when I went in for the Church, I was told that rhyming was not the thing for a parson ; the only proper thing for him

was at the most a Latin verse or a spiritual song. So I let it alone. Yet in secret I must always be making a jolly German rhyme now and again; but, alas! they all turn out bad, because I dare not have them sung aloud, and I often think that Hans Sachs, the Nuremberg shoemaker—another Hans for you—was more to be envied than all the parsons in Augsburg. Poor Veit! What we once strove after in our youth, signs to us and entices us all our life long, even though meantime we have attained something ten times as good. I'll write you your begging-letter, Veit, and in verse, too; for here surely there is a spiritual object as well; and as the hospital-chaplain may well rhyme for the forsaken old man, the hospital-master may well beg for him."

If they had not been in the public street, Veit would have fallen on the chaplain's neck for joy. But time was pressing. So the chaplain went home quickly and made his verses, and that same afternoon Veit went round the town with his poetical begging-letter. The chaplain had rhymed like the best master-singer, and Veit now begged not like a hospital-master, but like the best master-beggar, and the further he went on from house to house, bountifully answered by a hundred hands, the clearer it became to him that he had now at last found the best of all sorts of begging, namely, to beg unselfishly *for others*, and he imagined that when he said, "God bless you!" for poor forsaken Hans, it sounded even more movingly than the girl's merry thanks to the sad, and her woe-begone thanks to the joyful giver.

But, after he had got enough for the present, he hastened to the streams of the Lech, to Crooked Hans's den.

—There lay the old man, dead on his straw!

Veit stood as if thunderstruck. He had begged quite masterly once more, and yet it was again in vain!

After long silence and reflection, he at last observed two old beggars who were sitting beside the corpse. Crooked Hans had summoned them to his death-bed as the two most trustworthy men of his trade.

The elder of the two said to Veit: "We have perfect recollection of our friend's last will, which he repeated to us twice, clearly and being in his right mind. It ran somewhat as follows:

"What I gained in my lifetime, I received as the wages of poverty and misery; so I bequeath it in turn to the poorest and most miserable man in Augsburg. That man is my unfortunate foster-child Veit Roluf. He will go to wreck and ruin yet without fail, and then he will never be fit to become a proper beggar; for he has been utterly ruined for one. He has been a deserter from his calling, unfaithful to his friends, and yet I love him as a father does his unhappy, undutiful child. I cannot put the fortune into his own hands: a man who understands his interests so little as Veit does is not fit to manage an inheritance. So in order that he may have a pittance when he is, sooner or later, put out of his mastership and then cannot think of begging through the streets like a common vagrant, I leave my money in trust to the lodging-house-keeper of the 'Flying Fish,' that he may hand it over to some good business-house, and the interest may be paid the poor devil regularly at Whitsuntide and Easter every year. If Veit lives to be seventy, he may perhaps have learned wisdom by then."

Veit, who had thought to bring so much money to the poorest of men, and was now remembered by him with so much more, in fact with a rich burgher's fortune, did not know what to say, scarcely knew what to think. No one had known till then that Crooked Hans had scraped and gathered up so much money.

At last he said, clasping the corpse's cold bony hand, "Hans, father Hans, if you had only lived a few hours longer, you would have seen that I can still beg after all!" But then it occurred to him that now Hans could see down from the south porch of Heaven, and would know all about it, and praise him, as he used to do in old days for, having begged so well.

But afterwards, when he became calmer, he thought to himself that he had attained the goal of his youthful desires, and had equalled, nay even outshone, Crooked Hans, since he had practised in his lifetime that highest of all begging, which Hans had only discovered on his death-bed—*begging for others*. And so he was content, and remained, an excellent master, and never again attempted to beg for himself, and when he lifted the interest on his capital he always said, with uplifted eyes, as if he saw Crooked Hans sitting up yonder at the gate, "God bless you a thousandfold!"

Friendship Tried and True

The Greatest Treasure.

I HAVE read (sayeth he) and well I believe it, that a friend is in prosperity a pleasure, a solace in adversity, in grief a comfort, in joy a merry companion, at all times another I, in all places the express image of mine own person: insomuch that I cannot tell whether the immortal gods have bestowed any gift upon mortal men, either more noble or more necessary than friendship. Is there anything in the world to be reputed (I will not say compared) to friendship? Can any treasure in this transitory pilgrimage be of more value than a friend?

John Lyly.

Old and New.

I HAVE often thought that, as longevity is generally desired, and I believe generally expected, it would be wise to be continually adding to the number of our friends, that the loss of some may be supplied by others. Friendship, "the wine of life," should, like a well-stocked cellar, be thus continually renewed; and it is consolatory to think that although we can seldom add what will equal the generous *first-growths* of our youth, yet friendship becomes insensibly old in much less time than is commonly imagined, and not many years are required to make it very mellow and pleasant.

James Boswell.

BUT once or twice we met, touched hands
To-day between us both expands
A waste of tumbling waters wide—
A waste by me as yet untried,
Vague with the doubt of unknown lands.

Time like a despot speeds his sands:
A year he blots, a day he brands;
We walked, we talked by Thamis' side
But once or twice.

What makes a friend? What filmy strands
Are these that turn to iron bands?
What knot is this so firmly tied
That naught but Fate can now divide?—
Ah, these are things one understands
But once or twice!

Austin Dobson.

Unity in Diversity.

ONE would imagine that every man in society knows the nature of friendship. Similarity in the disposition, identity in the objects liked and disliked have been stated (and stated by myself) as the essence of it; nothing is untruer. Titus Pomponius and I are different in our sentiments, our manners, our habits of life, our ideas of men and things, our topics of study, our sects of philosophy; added to which our country and companions have these many years been wide apart; yet we are friends and always were, and, if man can promise anything beyond the morrow, always shall be.

Walter Savage Landor.

'Tis The Company That Makes The Feast.

A COMPANION that is cheerful, and free from swearing and scurrilous discourse, is worth gold. I love such mirth as does not make friends ashamed to look upon one another next morning; nor men that cannot well bear it, to repent the money they spend when warmed with drink: and take this for a rule, you may pick out such times and such companions, that you may make yourselves merrier for a little than a great deal of money; for, "'tis the company and not the charge that makes the feast"; and such a companion you prove, I thank you for it.

IZAAK WALTON.

Of a Perfect Amity.

I AM not in doubt of my will, and as little of such a friend's will. It is not in the power of the world's discourse to remove me from the certainty I have of his intentions and judgments of mine: no one of its actions might be presented unto me, under what shape soever, but I would presently find the spring and motion of it. Our minds have jumped so unitedly together, they have with so fervent an affection considered of each other, and with like affection so discovered and sounded even to the very bottom of each other's heart and entrails, that I did not only know his, as well as mine own, but I would (verily) rather have trusted him concerning any matter of mine, than my self. Let no man compare any of the other common friendships to this.

MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE.

THERE are ties no kinship makes
Nor force nor interest ever breaks,
That o'er the heart bear changeless sway,
And know not rupture nor decay;
Time's best and purest gift to man,
Wherein no base alloy we scan,
The perfect spiritual union
That binds two souls in blest communion.

BERTRAM DOBELL.

Governed by Our Imaginations.

LIFE is to be fortified with many friendships. To love, and to be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence. If I lived under the burning sun of the equator, it would be a pleasure to me to think that there were many human beings on the other side of the world who regarded and respected me; I could and would not live if I were alone upon the earth, and cut off from the remembrance of my fellow-creatures. It is not that a man has occasion often to fall back upon the kindness of his friends; perhaps he may never experience the necessity of doing so; but we are governed by our imaginations, and they stand there as a solid and impregnable bulwark against all the evils of life.

SYDNEY SMITH.

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TRILBY ▪ By

The most remarkable Novel

FOREWORD.—Of all the famous novels which have survived the exacting test of time "Trilby" is most likely to captivate the imagination of modern readers, for its appeal is to that inmost spirit of romance which is imperishable in human kind.

Taffy, the Laird, and Little Billee are as immortal in the realm of chivalry as are Porthos, Athos and D'Artagnan in that of adventure; they stand out for all time as symbols of that highest and noblest of human emotions—love of the opposite sex in its purest and most disinterested form.

IT was a fine, sunny, showery day in April.

The big studio window was open at the top, and let in a pleasant breeze from the north-west. Things were beginning to look shipshape at last. The big piano, a semi-grand by Broadwood, had arrived from England by "the Little Quickness" (*la Petite Vitesse*, as the goods trains are called in France), and lay, freshly tuned, alongside the eastern wall; on the wall opposite was a panoply of foils, masks and boxing-gloves.

A trapeze, a knotted rope and two parallel cords, supporting each a ring, depended from a huge beam in the ceiling. The walls were of the usual dull red, relieved by plaster casts of arms and legs and hands and feet; and Dante's mask and Michael Angelo's alto-rilievo of Leda and the swan, and a centaur and Lapith from the Elgin Marbles—on none of these had the dust as yet had time to settle.

There were also studies in oil from the nude; copies of Titian, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Rubens, Tintoret, Leonardo da Vinci—none of the school of Botticelli, Mantegna and Co.—a firm whose merits had not as yet been revealed to the many.

Along the walls, at a great height, ran a broad shelf, on which were other casts in plaster, terra-cotta, imitation bronze: a little Theseus, a little Venus of Milo, a little discobolus; a little flayed man threatening high heaven (an act that seemed almost pardonable under the circumstances!); a lion and a boar by Barye; an anatomical figure of a horse, with only one leg left and no ears; a horse's head from the pediment of the Parthenon, earless also; and the bust of Clytie, with her beautiful low brow, her sweet wan gaze, and the ineffable forward shrug of her dear shoulders that makes her bosom as a nest, a rest, a pillow, a refuge—the likeness of a thing to be loved and desired for ever.

Near the stove hung a gridiron, a frying-pan, a toasting-fork, and a pair of bellows. In an adjoining glazed corner cupboard were plates and glasses, black-handled knives, pewter spoons and three-pronged steel forks; a salad-bowl, vinegar cruets, an oil-flask, two mustard pots (English and French), and such like things—all scrupulously clean. On the floor, which had been stained and waxed at considerable cost, lay two cheetah-skins and a large Persian praying-rug. One half of it, however (under the trapeze and at the end farthest from the window, beyond the model-throne), was covered with coarse matting, that one might fence or box without slipping down and splitting one's self in two, or fall without breaking any bones.

Two other windows of the usual French size and pattern, with shutters to them and heavy curtains of baize, opened east and west, to let in dawn or sunset, as the case might be, or haply keep them out. And there were alcoves, recesses, irregularities, odd little nooks and corners, to be filled up as time wore on with endless personal nick-nacks, bibelots, private properties and acquisitions—things that make a place genial, homelike, and good to remember, and sweet to muse upon (with fond regret) in after years.

And an immense divan spread itself in width and length and delightful thickness just beneath the big north window, the business window—a divan so immense that three well-fed, well-contented Englishmen could all lie lazily smoking their pipes on it at once without being in each other's way, and very often did!

At present one of these Englishmen—a Yorkshireman, by the way, called Taffy (and also the Man of Blood, because he was supposed to be distantly related to a baronet)—was more energetically engaged. Bare-armed, and in his shirt and trousers, he was twirling a pair of Indian clubs round his head. His face was flushed and he was perspiring freely and looked fierce. He was a very big young man, fair, with kind but choleric blue eyes, and the muscles of his brawny arm were strong as iron bands.

For three years he had borne Her Majesty's commission, and had been through the Crimean

George du Maurier

of Bohemian life ever written

It speaks volumes for the genius and artistry of George du Maurier that his imagination could create, in contrast to the great-hearted and lovable Bohemians, so grotesque and macabre a figure as the Italian musician Svengali, a character made memorable to playgoers by the late Sir Herbert Tree.

Because I believe "Trilby" to be the greatest novel of its kind, and one which is certain to entrance a new generation of readers I am presenting it with every confidence of success.—Editor.

campaign without a scratch. He would have been one of the famous six hundred in the famous charge at Balaklava but for a sprained ankle (caught playing leapfrog in the trenches), which kept him in hospital on that momentous day. So that he lost his chance of glory or the grave, and this humiliating misadventure had sickened him of soldiering for life, and he never quite got over it. Then, feeling within himself an irresistible vocation for art, he had sold out, and here he was in Paris, hard at work, as we see.

He was good-looking, with straight features; but I regret to say that, besides his heavy plunger's moustache, he wore an immense pair of drooping auburn whiskers, of the kind that used to be called Piccadilly weepers, and were afterwards affected by Mr. Sothern in Lord Dundreary. It was a fashion to do so then for such of our gilded youth as could afford the time (and the hair); the bigger and fairer the whiskers, the more beautiful was thought the youth! It seems incredible in these days, when even Her Majesty's Household Brigade go about with smooth cheeks and lips, like priests or play actors.

What's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms . . .?

Another inmate of this blissful abode—Sandy, the Laird of Cockpen, as he was called—sat in similarly simple attire at his easel, painting at a life-like little picture of a Spanish toreador serenading a lady of high degree (in broad daylight). He had never been to Spain, but he had a complete toreador's kit—a bargain which he had picked up for a mere song in the Boulevard du Temple—and he had hired the guitar. His pipe was in his mouth—reversed; for it had gone out, and the ashes were spilled all over his trousers, where holes were often burned in this way.

Quite gratuitously, and with a pleasing Scotch accent, he began to declaim:

"A street there is in Paris famous
For which no rhyme our language yields;
Roo Nerve day Petty Shong its name is—
The New Street of the Little Fields. . . ."

And then, in his keen appreciation of the immortal stanza, he chuckled audibly, with a face so blithe and merry and well pleased that it did one good to look at him.

He also had entered life by another door. His parents (good, pious people in Dundee) had intended that he should be a solicitor, as his father and grandfather had been before him. And here he was in Paris famous, painting toreadors, and spouting the "Ballad of the Bouillabaisse," as he would often do out of sheer lightness of heart—much oftener, indeed, than he would say his prayers.

Kneeling on the divan, with his elbow on the window sill, was a third and much younger youth. The third he was "Little Billee." He had pulled down the green baize blind and was looking over the roofs and chimney-pots of Paris and all about with all his eyes, munching the while a roll and a savoury saveloy, in which there was evidence of much garlic. He ate with great relish, for he was very hungry; he had been all the morning at Carrel's studio, drawing from the life.

Little Billee was small and slender, about twenty or twenty-one, and had a straight white forehead veined with blue, large dark blue eyes, delicate, regular features, and coal-black hair. He was also very graceful and well built, with very small hands and feet and much better dressed than his friends, who went out of their way to outdo the denizens of the Quartier Latin in careless eccentricity of garb, and succeeded. And in his winning and handsome face there was just a faint suggestion of some possible very remote Jewish ancestor—just a tinge of that strong, sturdy, irrepressible, indomitable, indelible blood which is of such priceless value in diluted homœopathic doses, like the dry white Spanish wine called montijo, which is not meant to be taken pure; but without a judicious admixture of which no sherry can go round the world and keep its flavour intact; or like the famous bulldog strain, which is not beautiful in itself and yet just for lacking a little of the

same no greyhound can ever hope to be a champion. So, at least, I have been told by wine merchants and dog-fanciers—the most veracious persons that can be.

As Little Billee munched he also gazed at the busy place below—the Place St. Anatole des Arts—at the old houses opposite, some of which were being pulled down, no doubt lest they should fall of their own sweet will. In the gaps between he would see discoloured, old, cracked, dingy walls, with mysterious windows and rusty iron balconies of great antiquity—sights that set him dreaming dreams of mediæval French love and wickedness and crime, bygone mysteries of Paris!

One gap went right through the block, and gave him a glimpse of the river, the "Cité," and the ominous old Morgue; a little to the right rose the grey towers of Notre Dame de Paris into the checkered April sky. Indeed, with a little stretch of the imagination on his part, the top of nearly all Paris lay before him.

Paris! Paris!! Paris!!!

The very name had always been one to conjure with, whether he thought of it as a mere sound on the lips and in the ear, or as a magical written or printed word for the eye. And here was the thing itself at last, and he, he himself, *ipsissimus*, in the very heart of it, to live there and learn there as long as he liked, and make himself the great artist he longed to be.

Then, his meal finished, he lit a pipe and flung himself on the divan and sighed deeply, out of the over-full contentment of his heart.

He felt he had never known happiness like this, never even dreamed its possibility. And yet his life had been a happy one. He was young and tender, was Little Billee; he had never been to any school, and was innocent of the world and its wicked ways; innocent of French especially, and the ways of Paris and its Latin Quarter. He had been brought up and educated at home, had spent his boyhood in London with his mother and sister, who now lived in Devonshire on somewhat straitened means. His father, who was dead, had been a clerk in the Treasury.

He and his two friends, Taffy and the Laird, had taken this studio together. The Laird slept there, in a small bedroom off the studio. Taffy had a bedroom at the Hôtel de Seine, in the street of that name. Little Billee lodged at the Hôtel Corneille, in the Place de l'Odéon.

He looked at his two friends and wondered if any one, living or dead, had ever had such a glorious pair of chums as these.

Whatever they did, whatever they said, was simply perfect in his eyes; they were his guides and philosophers as well as his chums. On the other hand, Taffy and the Laird were as fond of the boy as they could be.

His absolute belief in all they said and did touched them none the less that they were conscious of its being somewhat in excess of their deserts. His almost girlish purity of mind amused and charmed them, and they did all they could to preserve it, even in the Quartier Latin, where purity is apt to go bad if it be kept too long.

They loved him for his affectionate disposition, his lively and caressing ways; and they admired him far more than he ever knew, for they recognised in him a quickness, a keenness, a delicacy of perception, in matters of form and colour, a mysterious facility and felicity of execution, a sense of all that was sweet and beautiful in nature, and a ready power of expressing it that had not been vouchsafed to them in any such generous profusion, and which, as they ungrudgingly admitted to themselves and each other, amounted to true genius.

And when one within the immediate circle of our intimates is gifted in this abnormal fashion, we either hate or love him for it, in proportion to the greatness of his gift; according to the way we are built.

So Taffy and the Laird loved Little Billee—loved him very much indeed. Not but what Little Billee had his faults. For instance, he didn't interest himself very warmly in other people's pictures. He didn't seem to care for the Laird's guitar-playing toreador, nor for his serenaded lady—at all events, he never said anything about them, either in praise or blame. He looked at Taffy's realisms (for Taffy was a realist) in silence, and nothing tries true friendship so much as silence of this kind.

But then, to make up for it, when they all three went to the Louvre, he didn't seem to trouble much about Titian either, or Rembrandt, or Velasquez, Rubens, Veronese or Leonardo. He looked at the people who looked at the pictures, instead of at the pictures themselves; especially at the people who copied them, the sometimes charming young lady painters—and these seemed to him even more charming than they really were—and he looked a great deal out of the Louvre windows, where there was much to be seen: more Paris, for instance, Paris, of which he could never have enough.

But when, surfeited with classical beauty, they all three went and dined together, and Taffy and the Laird said beautiful things about the old masters and quarrelled about them, he listened with deference and rapt attention and reverentially agreed with all they said; and afterwards made the most delightfully funny little pen-and-ink sketches of them, saying all these beautiful things (which he sent to his mother and sister at home); so lifelike, so real, that you could almost hear the beautiful things they said; so beautifully drawn that you felt the old masters couldn't have drawn them better themselves; and so irresistibly droll that you felt that the old masters could not have drawn them at all—any more than Milton could have described the quarrel between Sairey Gamp and Betsy Prig; no one, in short, but Little Billee.

Little Billee took up the "Ballad of the Bouillabaisse" where the Laird had left it off, and speculated on the future of himself and his friends, when he should have got to forty years—an almost impossibly remote future.

¶

THESE speculations were interrupted by a loud knock at the door, and two men came in.

First, a tall bony individual of any age between thirty and forty-five, of Jewish aspect, well-featured but sinister. He was very shabby and dirty, and wore a red *béret* and a large velveteen cloak, with a big metal clasp at the collar. His thick, heavy, languid, lustreless black hair fell down behind his ears on to his shoulders, in that musician-like way that is so offensive to the normal Englishman. He had bold, brilliant black eyes, with long heavy lids, a thin, sallow face and a beard of burnt-up black, which grew almost from his under eyelids; and over it his moustache, a shade lighter, fell in two long spiral twists. He went by the name of Svengali, and spoke fluent French with a German accent and humorous German twists and idioms, and his voice was very thin and mean and harsh, and often broke into a disagreeable falsetto.

His companion was a little swarthy young man—a gypsy, possibly—much pitted with the smallpox, and also very shabby. He had large, soft, affectionate brown eyes, like a King Charles spaniel. He had small, nervous, veiny hands, with nails bitten down to the quick, and carried a fiddle and a fiddlestick under his arm, without a case, as though he had been playing in the street.

"Ponchour, mes enfants," said Svengali. "Che vous amène mon ami Checko, qui choue du fiolon gomme un anche!"

Little Billee, who adored all "sweet musicianers," jumped up and made Gecko as warmly welcome as he could in his early French.

"Ha! le biâno!" exclaimed Svengali, flinging his red *béret* on it, and his cloak on the ground. "Ch'espère qu'il est pon, et pien t'accord!"

And sitting down on the music-stool, he ran up and down the scales with that easy power, that smooth even crispness of touch, which reveal the master.

Then he fell to playing Chopin's impromptu in A flat, so beautifully that Little Billee's heart went nigh to bursting with suppressed emotion and delight. He had never heard any music of Chopin's before, nothing but British provincial home-made music—melodies with variations, "Annie Laurie," "The Last Rose of Summer," "The Blue Bells of Scotland"; innocent little motherly and sisterly tinklings, invented to set the company at their ease on festive evenings.

He never forgot that impromptu, which he was destined to hear again one day in strange circumstances.

Then Svengali and Gecko made music together, divinely. Little fragmentary things, sometimes consisting of but a few bars, but these bars of *such* beauty and meaning! Scraps, snatches, short melodies, meant to fetch, to charm immediately, or to melt or sadden or madden just for a moment, and that knew just when to leave off—czardas, gypsy dances, Hungarian love-plaints, things little known out of eastern Europe in the fifties of this century, till the Laird and Taffy were almost as wild in their enthusiasm as Little Billee—a silent enthusiasm too deep for speech. And when these two great artists left off to smoke, the three Britishers were too much moved even for that, and there was a stillness. . . .

Suddenly there came a loud knuckle-rapping at the outer door, and a portentous voice of great volume, and that might almost have belonged to any sex (even an angel's), uttered the British milkman's yodel, "Milk below!" and before anyone could say "Entrez," a strange figure appeared, framed by the gloom of the little antechamber.

It was the figure of a very tall and fully-developed young female, clad in the grey overcoat of a French infantry soldier, continued netherwards by a short striped petticoat, beneath which were visible her bare white ankles and insteps, and slim, straight, rosy heels, clean cut and smooth as the back of a razor; her toes lost themselves in a huge pair of male slippers, which made her drag her feet as she walked.

She bore herself with easy, unembarrassed grace, like a person whose nerves and muscles are well in tune, whose spirits are high, who has lived much in the atmosphere of French studios, and feels at home in it.

This strange medley of garments was surmounted by a small bare head with short, thick, wavy brown hair, and a very healthy young face, which could scarcely be called quite beautiful at first sight, since the eyes were too wide apart, the mouth too large, the chin too massive, the complexion a mass of freckles. Besides, you can never tell how beautiful (or how ugly) a face may be till you have tried to draw it.

But a small portion of her neck, down by the collar-bone, which just showed itself between the unbuttoned lapels of her military coat collar, was of a delicate privet-like whiteness that is never to be found on any French neck and very few English ones. Also, she had a very fine brow, broad and low, with thick level eyebrows much darker than her hair, a broad, bony, high bridge to her short nose, and her full, broad cheeks were beautifully modelled. She would have made a singularly handsome boy.

As the creature looked round at the assembled company and flashed her big white teeth at them in an all-embracing smile of uncommon width and quite irresistible sweetness, simplicity and friendly trust, one saw at a glance that she

was out of the common clever, simple, humorous, honest, brave and kind, and accustomed to be genially welcomed wherever she went. Then suddenly closing the door behind her, dropping her smile, and looking wistful and sweet, with her head on one side and her arms akimbo, "Ye're all English, now, aren't ye?" she exclaimed. "I heard the music and thought I'd just come in for a bit, and pass the time of day; you don't mind? Trilby, that's my name—Trilby O'Ferrall."

She said this in English, with an accent half Scotch and certain French intonations, and in a voice so rich and deep and full as almost to suggest an incipient *tenore robusto*.

"We're delighted, on the contrary," said Little Billee, and advanced a chair for her.

But she said, "Oh, don't mind me; go on with the music," and sat herself down cross-legged on the model-throne near the piano.

As they still looked at her, curious and half embarrassed, she pulled a paper parcel containing food out of one of the coat-pockets, and exclaimed:

"I'll just take a bite, if you don't object; I'm a model, you know, and it's just rung twelve—' the rest.' I'm posing for Durien, the sculptor, on the next floor. I pose to him for the altogether."

"The altogether?" asked Little Billee.

"Yes—*l'ensemble*, you know—head, hands and feet—everything—especially feet. That's my foot," she said, kicking off her big slipper and stretching out the limb. "It's the handsomest foot in all Paris. There's only one in all Paris to match it, and here it is," and she laughed heartily (like a merry peal of bells) and stuck out the other.

And in truth they were astonishingly beautiful feet, such as one only sees in pictures and statues—a true inspiration of shape and colour, all made up of delicate lengths and subtly-modulated curves and noble straightnesses and happy little dimpled arrangements in innocent young pink and white.

So that Little Billee, who had the quick, prehensile, æsthetic eye, and knew by the grace of Heaven what the shapes and sizes and colours of almost every bit of man, woman or child should be (and so seldom are), was quite bewildered to find that a real, bare, live human foot could be such a charming object to look at, and felt that such a base or pedestal lent quite an antique and Olympian dignity to a figure that seemed just then rather grotesque in its mixed attire of military overcoat and female petticoat, and nothing else!

Poor Trilby!

The shape of those lovely slender feet (that were neither large nor small), facsimiled in dusty pale plaster of Paris, survives on the shelves and walls of many a studio throughout the world, and many a sculptor yet unborn has yet to marvel at their strange perfection.

For when Dame Nature takes it into her head to do her very best and bestow her minutest attention on a mere detail, as happens now and then—once in a blue moon, perhaps—she makes it uphill work for poor human art to keep pace with her.

It is a wondrous thing, the human foot—like the human hand; even more so, perhaps; but, unlike the hand, with which we are so familiar, it is seldom a thing of beauty in civilised adults who go about in leather boots or shoes.

So that it is hidden away in disgrace, a thing to be thrust out of sight and forgotten. It can sometimes be very ugly indeed—the ugliest thing there is, even in the fairest and highest and most gifted of her sex; and then it is of an ugliness to chill and kill romance, and scatter love's young dream.

And all for the sake of a high heel and a ridiculously-pointed toe—mean things, at the best!

Conversely, when Mother Nature has taken extra pains in the building of it, and proper care or happy chance has kept it free of lamentable deformations, indurations and discolorations—all those gruesome boot-begotten abominations which have made it so generally unpopular—the sudden sight of it, uncovered, comes as a very rare and singularly pleasing surprise to the eye that has learned how to see!

Trilby had respected Mother Nature's special gift to herself—had never worn a leather boot or shoe, had always taken as much care of her feet as many a fine lady takes of her hands. It was her one coquetry, the only real vanity she had.

Gecko, his fiddle in one hand and his bow in the other, stared at her in open-mouthed admiration and delight, as she ate her sandwich of soldier's bread and *fromage à la crème* quite unconcerned.

When she had finished she licked the tips of her fingers clean of cheese and produced a small tobacco-pouch from another military pocket, made herself a cigarette, and lit it and smoked it, inhaling the smoke in large whiffs, filling her lungs with it, and sending it back through her nostrils, with a look of great beatitude.

Svengali played Schubert's "Rosemonde" and flashed a pair of languishing black eyes at her with intent to kill.

But she didn't even look his way. She looked at Little Billee, at big Taffy, at the Laird, at the casts and studies, at the sky, the chimney-pots over the way, the towers of Notre Dame, just visible from where she sat.

Only when he finished she exclaimed: "Maïe, aïe! c'est rudement bien tapé, c'te musique-là! Seulement, c'est pas gai, vous savez! Comment q'ça s'appelle?"

"It is called the 'Rosemonde' of Schubert, matemoiselle," replied Svengali. (I will translate.)

"And what's that—Rosemonde?" said she.

"Rosemonde was a princess of Cyprus, matemoiselle, and Cyprus is an island."

"Ah, and Schubert, then—where's that?"

"Schubert is not an island, matemoiselle. Schubert was a compatriot of mine, and made music, and played the piano, just like me."

"Ah, Schubert was a *monsieur*, then. Don't know him; never heard his name."

"That is a pity, matemoiselle. He had some talent. You like this better, perhaps," and he strummed,

> "Messieurs les étudiants,
> S'en vont à la chaumière
> Pour y danser le cancan,"

striking wrong notes and banging out a bass in a different key—a hideously grotesque performance.

"Yes, I like that better. It's gayer, you know. Is that also composed by a compatriot of yours?" asked the lady.

"Heaven forbid, matemoiselle."

And the laugh was against Svengali.

But the real fun of it all (if there was any) lay in the fact that she was perfectly sincere.

"Are you fond of music?" asked Little Billee.

"Oh, ain't I just!" she replied. "My father sang like a bird. He was a gentleman and a scholar, my father was. His name was Patrick Michael O'Ferrall, Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge. He used to sing 'Ben Bolt.' Do you know 'Ben Bolt'?"

"Oh, yes, I know it well," said Little Billee. "It's a very pretty song."

"I can sing it," said Miss O'Ferrall. "Shall I?"

"Oh, certainly, if you will be so kind."

Miss O'Ferrall threw away the end of her cigarette, put her hands on her knees as she sat cross-legged on the model throne, and sticking her elbows well out, she looked up to the ceiling with a tender, sentimental smile, and sang the touching song:

> "Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt?
> Sweet Alice, with hair so brown?" etc., etc.

As some things are too sad and too deep for tears, so some things are too grotesque and too funny for laughter. Of such a kind was Miss O'Ferrall's performance of "Ben Bolt."

From that capacious mouth and through that high-bridged bony nose there rolled a volume of breathy sound, not loud, but so immense that it seemed to come from all round, to be reverberated from every surface in the studio. She followed more or less the shape of the tune, going up when it rose and down when it fell, but with such immense intervals between the notes as were never dreamed of in any mortal melody. It was as though she could never once have deviated into tune, never once have hit upon a true note, even by a fluke—in fact, as though she were absolutely tone-deaf and without ear, although she stuck to the time correctly enough.

She finished her song amid an embarrassing silence. The audience didn't quite know whether it were meant for fun or seriously. One wondered if she were not paying out Svengali for his impertinent performance of "Messieurs les étudiants." If so, it was a capital piece of impromptu tit-for-tat admirably acted, and a very ugly gleam yellowed the tawny black of Svengali's big eyes. He was so fond of making fun of others that he particularly resented being made fun of himself—couldn't endure that any one should ever have the laugh of *him*.

At length Little Billee said: "Thank you so much. It's a capital song."

"Yes," said Miss O'Ferrall. "It's the only song I know, unfortunately. My father used to sing it, just like that, when he felt jolly after hot rum-and-water. It used to make people cry; he used to cry over it himself. *I* never do. Some people think I can't sing a bit. All I can say is that I've often had to sing it six or seven times running in *lots* of studios. I vary it, you know—not the words, but the tune. You must remember that I've only taken to it lately. Do you know Litolff? Well, he's a great composer, and he came to Durien's the other day and I sang 'Ben Bolt,' and what do you think he said? Why, he said Madame Alboni couldn't go nearly so high or so low as I did, and that her voice wasn't half so big. He gave me his word of honour. He said I breathed as natural and straight as a baby, and all I want is to get my voice a little more under control. That's what *he* said."

"Qu'est-ce qu'elle dit?" asked Svengali. And she said it all over again to him in French—quite French French—of the most colloquial kind. Her accent was not that of the Comédie Française, nor yet that of the Faubourg St. Germain, nor yet that of the shop, or the pavement. It was quaint and expressive—"funny without being vulgar."

"Barpleu! he was right, Litolff," said Svengali. "I assure you, matemoiselle, that I have never heard a voice that can equal yours; you have a talent quite exceptional."

She blushed with pleasure, and the others thought him a "beastly cad" for poking fun at the poor girl in such a way. And they thought Monsieur Litolff another.

She then got up and shook the crumbs off her coat and slipped her feet into Durien's slippers, saying, in English: "Well, I've got to go back. Life ain't all beer and skittles, and more's the pity; but what's the odds, so long as you're happy?"

On her way out she stopped before Taffy's picture—a chiffonnier with his lantern, bending over a dust-heap. For Taffy was, or thought himself, a passionate realist in those days. He has changed, and now paints nothing but King Arthurs and Guineveres and Lancelots and Elaines, and floating Ladies of Shalott.

"That chiffonnier's basket isn't hitched high

enough," she remarked. "How could he tap his pick against the rim and make the rag fall into it if it's hitched only halfway up his back? And he's got the wrong sabots, and the wrong lantern; it's *all* wrong."

"Dear me!" said Taffy, turning very red; "you seem to know a lot about it. It's a pity you don't paint, yourself."

"Ah! now you're cross!" said Miss O'Ferrall. "Oh, male aïe!"

She went to the door and paused, looking round benignly. "What nice teeth you've all three got! That's because you're Englishmen, I suppose, and clean them twice a day. I do, too. Trilby O'Ferrall, that's my name, Forty-eight, Rue des Pousse-Cailloux!—pose pour l'ensemble, quand ça l'amuse! va-t-en ville, et fait tout ce qui concerne son état! Don't forget. Thanks all, and good-bye."

"En v'là une orichinale," said Svengali.

"I think she's lovely," said Little Billee, the young and tender. "Oh, heavens, what angel's feet! It makes me sick to think she sits for the figure. I'm sure she's quite a lady."

And in five minutes or so, with the point of an old compass, he scratched in white on the dark red wall a three-quarter profile outline of Trilby's left foot, which was perhaps the more perfect poem of the two.

Slight as it was, this little piece of impromptu etching, in its sense of beauty, in its quick seizing of a peculiar individuality, its subtle rendering of a strongly-received impression, was already the work of a master. It was Trilby's foot and nobody else's, nor could have been, and nobody else but Little Billee could have drawn it in just that inspired way.

"Qu'est ce que c'est, 'Ben Bolt'?" inquired Gecko.

Upon which Little Billee was made by Taffy to sit down to the piano and sing it. He sang it very nicely with his pleasant little throaty English baritone.

It was solely in order that Little Billee should have opportunities of practising this graceful accomplishment of his, for his own and his friends' delectation, that the piano had been sent over from London, at great cost to Taffy and the Laird. It had belonged to Taffy's mother, who was dead.

Before he had finished the second verse, Svengali exclaimed: "Mais c'est tout-à-fait chentil! Allons, Gecko, chouez-nous ça!"

And he put his big hands on the piano, over Little Billee's, pushed him off the music-stool with his great gaunt body, and, sitting on it himself, he played a masterly prelude. It was impressive to hear the complicated richness and volume of the sounds he evoked after Little Billee's gentle "tink-a-tink."

And Gecko, cuddling lovingly his violin and closing his upturned eyes, played that simple melody as it had probably never been played before—such passion, such pathos, such a tone!—and they turned it and twisted it, and went from one key to another, playing into each others' hands, Svengali taking the lead; and fugued and canoned and counterpointed and battledored and shuttlecocked it, high and low, soft and loud, in minor, in pizzicato, and in sordino—adagio, andante, allegretto, scherzo—and exhausted all its possibilities of beauty; till their susceptible audience of three was all but crazed with delight and wonder; and the masterful Ben Bolt, and his over-tender Alice, and his too submissive friend, and his old schoolmaster so kind and so true, and his long-dead schoolmates, and the rustic porch and the mill, and the slab of granite so grey,

> And the dear little nook
> By the clear running brook,

were all magnified into a strange, almost holy poetic dignity and splendour quite undreamed of by whoever wrote the words and music of that unsophisticated little song, which has touched so many simple British hearts that don't know any better—and among them, once, that of the present scribe—long, long ago!

"Sacrepleu! il choue pien, le Checko, hein?" said Svengali, when they had brought this wonderful double improvisation to a climax and a close. "C'est mon élève! che le fais chanter sur son fiolon, c'est comme si c'était *moi* qui chantais! ach! si ch'afais pour teux sous de voix, che serais le bremier chanteur du monte! I cannot sing!" he continued. (I will translate him into English, without attempting to translate his accent, which is a mere matter of judiciously transposing p's and b's, and t's and d's, and f's and v's, and g's and k's, and turning the soft French j into sch, and a pretty language into an ugly one.)

"I cannot sing myself, I cannot play the violin, but I can teach—hein, Gecko? And I have a pupil—hein, Gecko?—la betite Honorine;" and here he leered all round with a leer that was not engaging. "The world shall hear of la betite Honorine some day—hein, Gecko? Listen all—this is how I teach la betite Honorine! Gecko, play me a little accompaniment in pizzicato."

And he pulled out of his pocket a kind of little flexible flageolet (of his own invention, it seems), which he screwed together and put to his lips, and on this humble instrument he played "Ben Bolt," while Gecko accompanied him, using his fiddle as a guitar, his adoring eyes fixed in reverence on his master.

And it would be impossible to render in any words the deftness, the distinction, the grace, power, pathos and passion with which this truly phenomenal artist executed the poor old twopenny tune on his elastic penny whistle—for it was little more—such thrilling, vibrating, piercing tenderness, now loud and full, a shrill scream of anguish, now soft as a whisper, a mere melodic breath, more human almost than the human voice itself, a perfection unattainable

even by Gecko, a master, on an instrument which is the acknowledged king of all!

So that the tear, which had been so close to the brink of Little Billee's eye while Gecko was playing, now rose and trembled under his eyelid and spilled itself down his nose; and he had to dissemble and surreptitiously mop it up with his little finger as he leaned his chin on his hand, and cough a little husky, unnatural cough—*pour se donner une contenance!*

He had never heard such music as this, never dreamed such music was possible. He was conscious, while it lasted, that he saw deeper into the beauty, the sadness of things, the very heart of them, and their pathetic evanescence, as with a new, inner eye—even into eternity itself, beyond the veil—a vague cosmic vision that faded when the music was over, but left an unfading reminiscence of its having been, and a passionate desire to express the like some day through the plastic medium of his own beautiful art.

When Svengali ended, he leered again on his dumbstruck audience and said: "That is how I teach la betite Honorine to sing; that is how I teach Gecko to play; that is how I teach '*il bel canto*'! It was lost, the *bel canto*—but I found it, in a dream—I, and nobody else—I—Svengali—I—I—*I!* But that is enough of music; let us play at something else—let us play at this!" he cried, jumping up and seizing a foil and bending it against the wall. . . . "Come along, Little Pillee, and I will show you something more you don't know. . . ."

So Little Billee took off coat and waistcoat, donned mask and glove and fencing-shoes, and they had an "assault of arms," as it is nobly called in French, and in which poor Little Billee came off very badly. The German Pole fenced wildly, but well.

Then it was the Laird's turn, and he came off badly, too; so then Taffy took up the foil, and redeemed the honour of Great Britain, as became a British hussar and a Man of Blood. For Taffy, by long and assiduous practice in the best school in Paris (and also by virtue of his native aptitudes), was a match for any *maître d'armes* in the whole French army, and Svengali got "what for."

But Little Billee, who had had enough of fencing and gymnastics for the day, amused himself by filling up with black and white and red-chalk strokes the outline of Trilby's foot on the wall, lest he should forget his fresh vision of it, which was still to him as the thing itself—an absolute reality, born of a mere glance, a mere chance—a happy caprice!

Durien came in and looked over his shoulder, and exclaimed: "Tiens! le pied de Trilby! vous avez fait ça d'après nature?"

"Nong!"

"De mémoire, alors?"

"Wee!"

"Je vous en fais mon compliment! Vous avez eu la main heureuse. Je voudrais bien avoir fait ça, moi! C'est un petit chef-d'œuvre que vous avez fait là—tout bonnement, mon cher! Mais vous élaborez trop. De grâce, n'y touchez plus!"

And Little Billee was pleased, and touched it no more; for Durien was a great sculptor and sincerity itself.

¶

AND then—well, I happen to forget what sort of day this particular day turned into at about six of the clock.

If it was decently fine, the most of them went off to dine at the Restaurant de la Couronne, kept by the Père Trin (in the Rue de Monsieur), who gave you of his best to eat and drink for twenty sols Parisis, or one franc in the coin of the empire. Good distending soups, omelets that were only too savoury, lentils, red and white beans, meat so dressed and sauced and seasoned that you didn't know whether it was beef or mutton—flesh, fowl, or good red herring—or even bad, for that matter—nor very greatly cared.

And just the same lettuce, radishes and cheese of Gruyère or Brie as you got at the Trois Frères Provençaux (but not the same butter!). And to wash it all down, generous wine in wooden *brocs*—that stained a lovely æsthetic blue everything it was spilled over.

And you hobnobbed with models, male and female, students of law and medicine, painters and sculptors, workmen and *blanchisseuses* and grisettes, and found them very good company, and most improving to your French, if your French was of the usual British kind, and even to some of your manners, if these were very British indeed. And the evening was innocently wound up with billiards, cards or dominoes at the Café du Luxembourg opposite; or at the Théâtre du Luxembourg, in the Rue de Madame, to see funny farces with screamingly droll Englishmen in them.

Or, if it were not only fine, but a Saturday afternoon into the bargain, the Laird would put on a necktie and a few other necessary things, and the three friends would walk arm-in-arm to Taffy's hotel in the Rue de Seine, and wait outside till he had made himself as presentable as the Laird, which did not take very long. And then (Little Billee was always presentable) they would, arm-in-arm, the huge Taffy in the middle, descend the Rue de Seine and cross a bridge to the Cité, and have a look in at the Morgue. Then back again to the quays on the *rive gauche* by the Pont Neuf, to wend their way westward; now on one side to look at the print and picture shops and the *magasins* of bric-à-brac, and haply sometimes buy thereof, now on the other to finger and cheapen the second-hand books for sale on the parapet, and even pick up one or two utterly unwanted bargains, never to be read or opened again.

Then, still arm-in-arm and chatting gaily, across the courtyard of the Louvre, through gilded gates well guarded by reckless imperial Zouaves, up the arcaded Rue de Rivoli as far as the Rue Castiglione, where they would stare with greedy eyes at the window of the great corner pastry-cook, and marvel at the beautiful assortment of bonbons, *pralines*, *dragées*, *marrons glacés*—saccharine, crystalline substances of all kinds and colours, as charming to look at as an illumination; precious stones, delicately-frosted sweets, pearls and diamonds so arranged as to melt in the mouth; especially, at this particular time of the year, the monstrous Easter-egg, of enchanting hue, enshrined like costly jewels in caskets of satin and gold; and the Laird, who was well read in his English classics and liked to show it, would opine that "they managed these things better in France."

Then across the street by a great gate into the Allée des Feuillants, and up to the Place de la Concorde—to gaze, but quite without base envy, at the smart people coming back from the Bois de Boulogne. For even in Paris "carriage people" have a way of looking bored, of taking their pleasure sadly, of having nothing to say to each other, as though the vibration of so many wheels all rolling home the same way every afternoon had hypnotised them into silence, idiocy and melancholia.

And our three musketeers of the brush would speculate on the vanity of wealth and rank and fashion; on the satiety that follows in the wake of self-indulgence; on the weariness of the pleasures that become a toil—as if they knew all about it, had found it all out for themselves, and nobody else had ever found it out before!

Then they found out something else—namely, that the sting of healthy appetite was becoming intolerable; so they would betake themselves to an English eating-house in the Rue de la Madeleine (on the left-hand side, near the top), where they would renovate their strength and their patriotism on British beef and beer, and household bread, and bracing, biting, stinging yellow mustard, and heroic horseradish, and noble apple pie, and Cheshire cheese; and get through as much of these in an hour or so as they could for talking, talking, talking; such happy talk! as full of sanguine hope and enthusiasm, of cocksure commendation or condemnation of all painters, dead or alive, of modest but firm belief in themselves and each other, as a Paris Easter-egg is full of sweets and pleasantness (for the young).

Then home by dark, old, silent streets and some deserted bridge to their beloved Latin Quarter, the Morgue gleaming cold and still and fatal in the pale lamplight, and Notre Dame pricking up its watchful twin towers, which have looked down for so many centuries on so many happy, sanguine, expansive youths walking arm-in-arm by twos and threes, and for ever talking, talking, talking. . . .

The Laird and Little Billee would see Taffy safe to the door of his *hôtel garni* in the Rue de Seine, where they would find much to say to each other before they said good-night—so much that Taffy and Little Billee would see the Laird safe to *his* door, in the Place St. Anatole des Arts. And then a discussion would arise between Taffy and the Laird on the immortality of the soul, let us say, or the exact meaning of the word "gentleman," or the relative merits of Dickens and Thackeray, or some such recondite and quite unhackneyed theme, and Taffy and the Laird would escort Little Billee to *his* door in the Place de l'Odéon, and he would re-escort them both back again, and so on till any hour you please.

Oh, happy days and happy nights, sacred to art and friendship! Oh, happy times of careless impecuniosity and youth and hope and health and strength and freedom—with all Paris for a playground and its dear old unregenerate Latin Quarter for a workshop and a home!

And, up to then, no kill-joy complications of love!

No, decidedly no! Little Billee had never known such happiness as this—never even dreamed of its possibility.

¶

A DAY or two after this, our opening day, but in the afternoon, when the fencing and boxing had begun and the trapeze was in full swing, Trilby's "Milk below!" was sounded at the door and she appeared—clothed this time and in her right mind, as it seemed: a tall, straight, flat-backed, square-shouldered, deep-chested, full-bosomed young grisette, in a snowy frilled cap, a neat black gown and white apron, pretty faded, well-darned brown stockings and well-worn, soft, grey, square-toed slippers of list, without heels and originally shapeless; but which her feet, uncompromising and inexorable as boot-trees, had ennobled into everlasting classic shapeliness and stamped with an unforgettable individuality, as does a beautiful hand its well-worn glove—a fact Little Billee was not slow to perceive, with a curious conscious thrill that was only half æsthetic.

Then he looked into her freckled face and met the kind and tender mirthfulness of her gaze and the plucky frankness of her fine wide smile with a thrill that was not æsthetic at all (nor the reverse), but all of the heart. And in one of his quick flashes of intuitive insight he divined far down beneath the shining surface of those eyes (which seemed for a moment to reflect only a little image of himself against the sky beyond the big north window) a well of sweetness; and floating somewhere in the midst of it the very heart of compassion, generosity and warm sisterly love; and under that—alas! at the bottom of all—a thin slimy layer of sorrow and shame. And just as long as it takes for a tear

to rise and gather and choke itself back again, this sudden revelation shook his nervous little frame with a pang of pity and the knightly wish to help. But he had no time to indulge in such soft emotions. Trilby was met on her entrance by friendly greetings on all sides.

"Tiens! c'est la grande Trilby!" exclaimed Jules Guinot through his fencing-mask. "Comment! t'es déjà debout après hier soir? Avons-nous assez rigolé chez Mathieu, hein? Crénom d'un nom, quelle noce! V'là une crémaillère qui peut se vanter d'être diantrement bien pendue, j'espère! Et la petite santé, c' matin?"

"Hé, hé! mon vieux," answered Trilby. "Ça boulotte apparemment! Et toi? et Victorine? Comment qu'a s' porte à c't'heure? Elle avait un fier coup d'chasselas! c'est-y jobard, hein? de s' fich 'paf comme ça d'vant l' monde! Tiens, v'là, Gontran! ça marche-t-y, Gontran, Zouzou d' mon cœur?"

"Comme sur des roulettes, ma biche!" said Gontran, *alias* l'Zouzou—a corporal in the Zouaves. "Mais tu t'es donc mise chiffonnière, à présent? T'as fait banque-route?"

(For Trilby had a chiffonnier's basket strapped on her back, and carried a pick and lantern.)

"Mais-z-oui, mon bon!" she said. "Dame! pas d' veine hier soir! t'as bien vu! Dans la dêche jusqu'aux omoplates, mon pauv' caporal-sous-off! nom d'un canon—faut bien vivre, s' pas?"

Little Billee's heart-sluices had closed during this interchange of courtesies. He felt it to be of a very slangy kind, because he couldn't understand a word of it, and he hated slang. All he could make out was the free use of the *tu* and the *toi*, and he knew enough French to know that this implied a great familiarity, which he misunderstood.

"Good afternoon to you, Mr. Taffy," said Trilby in English. "I've brought you these objects of art and virtu to make the peace with you. They're the real thing, you know. I borrowed 'em from le père Martin, chiffonnier en gros et en détail, grand officier de la Légion d'Honneur, membre de l'Institut et cetera, treize bis Rue du Puits d'Amour, rez-de-chaussée au fond de la cour à gauche, vis-à-vis le mont-de-piété! He's one of my intimate friends, and—"

"You don't mean to say you're the intimate friend of a *rag-picker?*" exclaimed the good Taffy.

"Oh, yes! Pourquoi pas? I never brag; besides, there ain't any beastly pride about le père Martin," said Trilby, with a wink. "You'd soon find that out if *you* were an intimate friend of his. This is how it's put on. Do you see? If *you'll* put it on I'll fasten it for you and show you how to hold the lantern and handle the pick. You may come to it yourself some day, you know. Il ne faut jurer de rien! Père Martin will pose for you in person, if you like. He's generally disengaged in the afternoon. He's poor but honest, you know, and very nice and clean; quite the gentleman. He likes artists, especially English—they pay. His wife sells bric-à-brac and old masters: Rembrandts from two francs fifty upwards. They've got a little grandson—a love of a child. I'm his godmother. You know French, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes," said Taffy, much abashed. "I'm very much obliged to you—very much indeed—a—I—a——"

"Y a pas d' quoi!" said Trilby, divesting herself of her basket and putting it, with the pick and lantern, in a corner. "Et maintenant, le temps d'absorber une fine de fin sec [a cigarette] et je m'la brise [I'm off]. On m'attend à l'Ambassade d'Autriche. Et puis zut! Allez toujours, mes enfants. En avant la boxe!"

She sat herself down cross-legged on the model-throne and made herself a cigarette, and watched the fencing and boxing. Little Billee brought her a chair, which she refused; so he sat down on it himself by her side and talked to her, just as he would have talked to any young lady at home—about the weather, about Verdi's new opera (which she had never heard), the impressiveness of Notre Dame, and Victor Hugo's beautiful romance (which she had never read), the mysterious charm of Leonardo da Vinci's Lisa Gioconda's smile (which she had never seen)—by all of which she was no doubt rather tickled and a little embarrassed, perhaps also a little touched.

Taffy brought her a cup of coffee and conversed with her in polite formal French very well and carefully pronounced; and the Laird tried to do likewise.

Others dropped in from neighbouring studios—the usual cosmopolite crew.

There were ladies, too, *en cheveux*, in caps and bonnets, some of whom knew Trilby, and thee'd and thou'd with familiar and friendly affection, while others mademoiselle'd her with distant politeness, and were mademoiselle'd and madame'd back again. "Absolument comme à l'Ambassade d'Autriche," as Trilby observed to the Laird, with a British wink that was by no means ambassadorial.

Then Svengali came and made some of his grandest music, which was as completely thrown away on Trilby as fireworks on a blind beggar, for all she held her tongue so piously.

Fencing and boxing and trapezing seemed to be more in her line; and indeed, to a tone-deaf person Taffy, lunging his full spread with a foil, in all the splendour of his long, lithe, youthful strength, was a far gainlier sight than Svengali at the keyboard flashing his languid bold eyes with a sickly smile from one listener to another, as if to say: "N'est-ce pas que che suis peau? N'est-ce pas que ch'ai tu chénie? N'est-ce pas que che suis suplime, enfin?"

Then enter Durien, the sculptor, who had been presented with a *baignoire* at the Porte St. Martin to see *La Dame aux Camélias*, and he

invited Trilby and another lady to dine with him *au cabaret* and share his box.

So Trilby didn't go to the Austrian embassy after all, as the Laird observed to Little Billee, with such a good imitation of her wink that Little Billee was bound to laugh.

But Little Billee was not inclined for fun; a dullness, a sense of disenchantment, had come over him; as he expressed it to himself, with pathetic self-pity:

> "A feeling of sadness and longing
> That is not akin to pain,
> And resembles sorrow only
> As the mist resembles the rain."

And the sadness, if he had known, was that all beautiful young women with kind sweet faces and noble figures and goddess-like extremities should not be good and pure as they were beautiful; and the longing was a longing that Trilby could be turned into a young lady—say the vicar's daughter in a little Devonshire village—his sister's friend and co-teacher at the Sunday school, a simple, pure and pious maiden of gentle birth.

For he adored piety in woman, although he was not pious by any means. His inarticulate, intuitive perceptions were not of form and colour secrets only, but strove to pierce the veil of deeper mysteries in impetuous and dogmatic boyish scorn of all received interpretations. For he flattered himself that he possessed the philosophical and scientific mind and piqued himself on thinking clearly, and was intolerant of human inconsistency.

That small reserve portion of his ever-active brain which should have lain fallow while the rest of it was at work or play, perpetually plagued itself about the mysteries of life and death, and was for ever propounding unanswerable arguments against the Christian belief, through a kind of inverted sympathy with the believer.

To atone for such ungainly strong-mindedness in one so young and tender, he was the slave of many little traditional observances which have no very solid foundation in either science or philosophy. For instance, he wouldn't walk under a ladder for worlds, nor sit down thirteen to dinner, nor have his hair cut on a Friday, and was quite upset if he happened to see the new moon through glass. And he believed in lucky and unlucky numbers, and dearly loved the sights and scents and sounds of high mass in some dim old French cathedral, and found them secretly comforting.

Let us hope that he sometimes laughed at himself, if only in his sleeve!

And with all his keenness of insight into life he had a well-brought-up, middle-class young Englishman's belief in the infallible efficacy of gentle birth—for gentle he considered his own and Taffy's and the Laird's, and that of most of the good people he had lived among in England—all people, in short, whose two parents and four grandparents had received a liberal education and belonged to the professional class. And with this belief he combined (or thought he did) a proper democratic scorn for bloated dukes and lords, and even poor inoffensive baronets, and all the landed gentry—everybody who was born an inch higher up than himself.

It is a fairly good middle-class social creed, if you can only stick to it through life in despite of life's experience. It fosters independence and self-respect, and not a few stodgy practical virtues as well.

And all this melancholy preoccupation, on Little Billee's part, from the momentary gleam and dazzle of a pair of over-perfect feet in an over-æsthetic eye, too much enamoured of mere form!

Reversing the usual process, he had idealised from the base upward!

Many of us, older and wiser than Little Billee, have seen in lovely female shapes the outer garment of a lovely female soul. The instinct which guides us to do this is, perhaps, a right one, more often than not. But more often than not, also, lovely female shapes are terrible complicators of the difficulties and dangers of this earthly life, especially for their owner, and more especially if she be a humble daughter of the people, poor and ignorant, of a yielding nature, too quick to love and trust. This is all so true as to be trite—so trite as to be a common platitude!

A modern teller of tales, most widely (and most justly) popular, tells us of Californian heroes and heroines who, like Lord Byron's Corsair, were linked with one virtue and a thousand crimes. And so dexterously does he weave his story that the Young Person may read it and learn nothing but good.

My poor heroine was the converse of these engaging criminals; she had all the virtues but one; but the virtue she lacked (the very one of all that plays the title-rôle, and gives its generic name to all the rest of that goodly company) was of such a kind that I have found it impossible so to tell her history as to make it quite fit and proper reading for the ubiquitous young person so dear to us all.

Most deeply to my regret. For I had fondly hoped it might one day be said of me that whatever my other literary shortcomings might be, I at least had never penned a line which a pure-minded young British mother might not read aloud to her little blue-eyed babe as it lies sucking its little bottle in its little bassinette.

Fate has willed it otherwise.

Would indeed that I could duly express poor Trilby's one shortcoming in some not too familiar medium—in Latin or Greek, let us say—lest the Young Person (in this ubiquitousness of hers, for which Heaven be praised) should happen to pry into these pages when her mother is looking another way.

But at least am I scholar enough to enter on a little Latin plea on Trilby's behalf—the shortest,

best and most beautiful plea I can think of. It was once used in extenuation and condonation of the frailties of another poor weak woman, presumably beautiful, and a far worse offender than Trilby, but who, like Trilby, repented of her ways and was most justly forgiven—

Quia multum amavit!

Whether it be an aggravation of her misdeeds or an extenuating circumstance, no pressure of want, no temptations of greed or vanity, had ever been factors in urging Trilby on her downward career after her first false step in that direction—the result of ignorance, bad advice (from her mother, of all people in the world) and base betrayal. She might have lived in guilty splendour had she chosen, but her wants were few. She had no vanity, and her tastes were of the simplest, and she earned enough to gratify them all, and to spare.

So she followed love for love's sake only, now and then, as she would have followed art if she had been a man—capriciously, desultorily, more in a frolicsome sprit of *camaraderie* than anything else. Like an amateur, in short—a distinguished amateur who is too proud to sell his pictures, but willingly gives one away now and then to some highly-valued and much-admiring friend.

Sheer gaiety of heart and genial good-fellowship, the difficulty of saying nay to earnest pleading. She was *bonne camarade et bonne fille* before everything. Though her heart was not large enough to harbour more than one light love at a time (even in that Latin Quarter of genially capacious hearts), it had room for many warm friendships; and she was the warmest, most helpful and most compassionate of friends, far more serious and faithful in friendship than in love.

Indeed, she might almost be said to possess a virginal heart, so little did she know of love's heartaches and raptures and torments and clingings and jealousies.

With her it was lightly come and lightly go, and never come back again; as one or two, or perhaps three, picturesque Bohemians of the brush or chisel had found, at some cost to their vanity and self-esteem; perhaps even to a deeper feeling—who knows?

Trilby's father, as she had said, had been a gentleman, the son of a famous Dublin physician and friend of George the Fourth's. He had been a Fellow of his college, and had entered holy orders. He also had all the virtues but one; he was a drunkard, and began to drink quite early in life. He soon left the Church and became a classical tutor and failed through this besetting sin of his, and fell into disgrace.

Then he went to Paris and picked up a few English pupils there and lost them, and earned a precarious livelihood from hand to mouth, anyhow, and sank from bad to worse.

And when his worst was about reached, he married the famous tartaned and tam-o'-shantered barmaid at the Montagnards Écossais, in the Rue du Paradis Poissonnière (a very fishy paradise indeed): she was a most beautiful Highland lassie of low degree, and she managed to support him, or helped him to support himself, for ten or fifteen years. Trilby was born to them, and was dragged up in some way—*à la grâce de Dieu!*

Patrick O'Ferrall soon taught his wife to drown all care and responsibility in his own simple way, and opportunities for doing so were never lacking to her.

Then he died, and left a posthumous child—born ten months after his death, alas! and whose birth cost its mother her life.

Then Trilby became a *blanchisseuse de fin*, and in two or three years came to grief through her trust in a friend of her mother's. Then she became a model besides, and was able to support her little brother, whom she dearly loved.

At the time this story begins, this small waif and stray was *en pension* with le père Martin, the rag-picker, and his wife, the dealer in bric-à-brac and inexpensive old masters. They were very good people and had grown fond of the child, who was beautiful to look at and full of pretty tricks and pluck and cleverness—a popular favourite in the Rue du Puits d'Amour and its humble neighbourhood.

Trilby, for some freak, always chose to speak of him as her godson, and as the grandchild of le père et la mère Martin, so that these good people had almost grown to believe he really belonged to them.

And almost every one else believed that he was the child of Trilby (in spite of her youth), and she was so fond of him that she didn't mind in the least.

He might have had a worse home.

La mère Martin was pious, or pretended to be; le père Martin was the reverse. But they were equally good for their kind, and though coarse and ignorant and unscrupulous in many ways (as was natural enough), they were gifted in a very full measure with the saving graces of love and charity, especially he. And if people are to be judged by their works, this worthy pair are no doubt both equally well compensated by now for the trials and struggles of their sordid earthly life.

So much for Trilby's parentage.

And as she sat and wept at Madame Doche's impersonation of *La Dame aux Camélias* (with her hand in Durien's) she vaguely remembered, as in a waking dream, now the noble presence of Taffy as he towered cool and erect, foil in hand, gallantly waiting for his adversary to breathe, now the beautiful sensitive face of Little Billee and his deferential courtesy.

And during the *entr'actes* her heart went out in friendship to the jolly Scotch Laird of Cockpen, who came out now and then with such terrible

French oaths and abominable expletives (and in the presence of ladies, too!), without the slightest notion of what they meant.

For the Laird had a quick ear and a craving to be colloquial and idiomatic before everything else, and made many awkward and embarrassing mistakes.

CHAPTER II

NOBODY knew exactly how Svengali lived and very few knew where (or why). He occupied a roomy dilapidated garret, *au sixième*, in the Rue Tire-Liard, with a truckle-bed and a pianoforte for furniture, and very little else.

He was poor, for in spite of his talent he had not yet made his mark in Paris. His manners may have been accountable for this. He would either fawn or bully, and could be grossly impertinent. He had a kind of cynical humour, which was more offensive than amusing, and always laughed at the wrong thing, at the wrong time, in the wrong place. And his laughter was always derisive and full of malice. And his egotism and conceit were not to be borne; and then he was both tawdry and dirty in his person; more greasily, mattedly unkempt than even a really successful pianist has any right to be even in the best society.

He was not a nice man, and there was no pathos in his poverty—a poverty that was not honourable and need not have existed at all; for he was constantly receiving supplies from his own people in Austria—his old father and mother, his sisters, his cousins and his aunts, hard-working, frugal folk of whom he was the pride and the darling.

He had but one virtue—his love of his art; or, rather, his love of himself as a master of his art—*the* master; for he despised, or affected to despise, all other musicians, living or dead—even those whose work he interpreted so divinely, and pitied them for not hearing Svengali give utterance to their music, which of course they could not utter themselves.

He had been the best pianist of his time at the Conservatory in Leipsic; and, indeed, there was perhaps some excuse for this overweening conceit, since he was able to lend a quite peculiar individual charm of his own to any music he played, except the highest and best of all, in which he conspicuously failed.

He had to draw the line just above Chopin, where he reached his highest level. It will not do to lend your own quite peculiar individual charm to Handel and Bach and Beethoven; and Chopin is not bad as a *pis-aller*.

He had ardently wished to sing and had studied hard to that end in Germany, in Italy, in France, with the forlorn hope of evolving from some inner recess a voice to sing with. But nature had been singularly harsh to him in this one respect—inexorable. He was absolutely without voice, beyond the harsh, hoarse, weak raven's croak he used to speak with, and no method availed to make one for him. But he grew to understand the human voice as perhaps no one has understood it—before or since.

So in his head he went for ever singing, singing, singing, as probably no human nightingale has ever yet been able to sing out loud for the glory and delight of his fellow-mortals; making unheard heavenly melody of the cheapest, trivialest tunes—tunes of the café concert, tunes of the nursery, the shop-parlour, the guard-room, the schoolroom, the pothouse, the slum. There was nothing so humble, so base even, but what his magic could transform it into the rarest beauty without altering a note. This seems impossible, I know. But if it didn't, where would the magic come in?

Whatever of heart or conscience—pity, love, tenderness, manliness, courage, reverence, charity—endowed him at his birth had been swallowed up by this one faculty, and nothing of them was left for the common uses of life. He poured them all into his little flexible flageolet.

Svengali playing Chopin on the pianoforte, even (or especially) Svengali playing 'Ben Bolt" on that penny whistle of his, was as one of the heavenly host.

Svengali walking up and down the earth seeking whom he might cheat, betray, exploit, borrow money from, make brutal fun of, bully if he dared, cringe to if he must—man, woman, child, or dog—was about as bad as they make 'em.

To earn a few pence when he couldn't borrow them he played accompaniments at café concerts, and even then he gave offence; for in his contempt for the singer he would play too loud, and embroider his accompaniments with brilliant improvisations of his own, and lift his hands on high and bring them down with a bang in the sentimental parts, and shake his dirty mane and shrug his shoulders and smile and leer at the audience, and do all he could to attract their attention to himself. He also gave a few music lessons (not at ladies' schools, let us hope), for which he was not well paid, presumably, since he was always without a sou, always borrowing money, that he never paid back, and exhausting the pockets and the patience of one acquaintance after another.

He had but two friends. There was Gecko, who lived in a little garret close by in the Impasse des Ramoneurs, and who was second violin in the orchestra of the Gymnase, and shared his humble earnings with his master, to whom, indeed, he owed his great talent, not yet revealed to the world.

Svengali's other friend and pupil was (or rather had been) the mysterious Honorine, of whose conquest he was much given to boast, hinting that she was *une jeune femme du monde*.

This was not the case. Mademoiselle Honorine Cahen (better known in the Quartier Latin as Mimi la Salope) was a dirty, drabby little dolly-mop of a Jewess, a model for the figure—a very humble person indeed, socially.

She was, however, of a very lively disposition, and had a charming voice and a natural gift of singing so sweetly that you forgot her accent, which was of the *tout ce qu'il y a de plus canaille*.

Svengali had heard her sing at the Brasserie des Porcherons in the Rue du Crapaud-volant, and had volunteered to teach her; and she went to see him in his garret, and he played to her, and leered and ogled, and flashed his bold, black, beady Jew's eyes into hers, and she straightway mentally prostrated herself in reverence and adoration before this dazzling specimen of her race.

So that her sordid, mercenary little gutter-draggled soul was filled with the sight and the sound of him, as of a lordly, godlike, shawm-playing, cymbal-banging hero and prophet of the Lord God of Israel—David and Saul in one!

And then he set himself to teach her—kindly and patiently at first, calling her sweet little pet names—his "Rose of Sharon," his "pearl of Pabylon," his "cazelle-eyed liddle Cherusalem skylark"—and promised her that she should be the queen of the nightingales.

She did her very best and practised all she could in this new way, and sang herself hoarse; she scarcely ate or slept for practising. He grew harsh and impatient and coldly severe, and of course she loved him all the more; and the more she loved him the more nervous she got and the worse she sang. Her voice cracked; her ear became demoralised; her attempts to vocalise grew almost as distressing as Trilby's. So that he lost his temper completely and called her terrible names and pinched and punched her with his big bony hands till she wept worse than Niobe, and borrowed money of her—five-franc pieces, even francs and demifrancs—which he never paid her back; and browbeat and bullied and bully-ragged her till she went quite mad for love of him, and would have jumped out of his sixth-floor window to give him a moment's pleasure!

He did not ask her to do this—it never occurred to him and would have given him no pleasure to speak of. But one fine Sabbath morning (a Saturday, of course) he took her by the shoulders and chucked her, neck and crop, out of his garret with the threat that if she ever dared to show her face there again he would denounce her to the police—an awful threat to the likes of poor Mimi la Salope!

"For where did all those five-franc pieces come from—*hein?*—with which she had tried to pay for all the singing lessons that had been thrown away upon her? Not from merely sitting to painters—*hein?*"

Thus the little gazelle-eyed Jerusalem skylark went back to her native streets again—a mere mud-lark of the Paris slums—her wings clipped, her spirit quenched and broken and with no more singing left in her than a common or garden sparrow—not so much!

And so, no more of "la betite Honorine!"

¶

THE morning after this adventure Svengali woke up in his garret with a tremendous longing to spend a happy day; for it was a Sunday. and a very fine one.

He made a long arm and reached his waistcoat and trousers off the floor and emptied the contents of their pockets on to his tattered blanket; no silver, no gold, only a few sous and two-sou pieces, just enough to pay for a meagre *premier déjeuner!*

He had cleared out Gecko the day before and spent the proceeds (ten francs, at least) in one night's riotous living—pleasures in which Gecko had had no share; and he could think of no one to borrow money from but Little Billee, Taffy and the Laird, whom he had neglected and left untapped for days.

So he slipped into his clothes and looked at himself in what remained of a little zinc mirror, and found that his forehead left little to be desired, but that his eyes and temples were decidedly grimy. Wherefore, he poured a little water out of a little jug into a little basin and twisting the corner of his pocket-handkerchief round his dirty forefinger, he delicately dipped it and removed the offending stains. His fingers, he thought, would do very well for another day or two as they were; he ran them through his matted black mane, pushed it behind his ears and gave it the twist he liked (and that was so much disliked by his English friends). Then he put on his *béret* and his velveteen cloak and went forth into the sunny streets, with a sense of the fragrance and freedom and pleasantness of Sunday morning in Paris in the month of May.

He found Little Billee sitting in a zinc hip-bath, busy with soap and sponge; and was so tickled and interested by the sight that he quite forgot for the moment what he had come for.

"Himmel! Why the devil are you doing that?" he asked, in his German-Hebrew-French.

"Doing *what?*" asked Little Billee, in his French of Stratford-atte-Bowe.

"Sitting in water and playing with a cake of soap and a sponge!"

"Why, to try and get myself *clean*, I suppose!"

"Ach! And how the devil did you get yourself *dirty*, then?"

To this Little Billee found no immediate answer, and went on with his ablutions after the hissing, splashing, energetic fashion of Englishmen; and Svengali laughed loud and long at the spectacle of a little Englishman trying to get himself clean—*tâchant de se nettoyer!*

When such cleanliness had been attained as was possible under the circumstances, Svengali begged for the loan of two hundred francs, and Little Billee gave him a five-franc piece.

Content with this, *faute de mieux*, the German asked him when he would be trying to get himself clean again, as he would much like to come and see him do it.

" Demang mattang, à votre sairveece ! " said Little Billee, with a courteous bow.

" *What ! ! Monday too ! !* Gott in Himmel ! you try to get yourself clean *every day ?* "

And he laughed himself out of the room, out of the house, out of the Place de l'Odéon—all the way to the Rue de Seine, where dwelt the " Man of Blood," whom he meant to propitiate with the story of that original, Little Billee, trying to get himself clean—that he might borrow another five-franc piece, or perhaps two.

As the reader will no doubt anticipate, he found Taffy in his bath also, and fell to laughing with such convulsive laughter, such twistings, screwings and doublings of himself up, such pointings of his dirty forefinger at the huge naked Briton, that Taffy was offended, and all but lost his temper.

" What the devil are you cackling at, sacred head of pig that you are ? Do you want to be pitched out of that window into the Rue de Seine ? You filthy black Hebrew sweep ! Just you wait a bit ; *I'll* wash your head for you ! "

And Taffy jumped out of his bath, such a towering figure of righteous Herculean wrath that Svengali was appalled, and fled.

" Donnerwetter ! " he exclaimed as he tumbled down the narrow staircase of the Hôtel de Seine ; " what for a thick head ! What for a pigdog ! What for a rotten, brutal, *verfluchter kerl* of an Englander ! "

Then he paused for thought.

" Now will I go to that Scottish Englander, in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, for that other five-franc piece. But first will I wait a little while till he has perhaps finished trying to get himself clean."

So he breakfasted at the crémerie Souchet, in the Rue Clopin-Clopant, and, feeling quite safe again, he laughed and laughed till his very sides were sore.

Two Englanders in one day—as naked as your hand !—a big one and a little one, trying to get themselves clean !

He rather flattered himself he had scored off those two Englanders.

Just as Svengali was about to knock at the Laird's door, Trilby came downstairs from Durien's, very unlike herself. Her eyes were red with weeping, and there were great black rings round them ; she was pale under her freckles.

" Fous afez du chacrin, matemoiselle ? " asked he.

She told him that she had neuralgia in her eyes, a thing she was subject to ; that the pain was maddening, and generally lasted twenty-four hours.

" Perhaps I can cure you ; come in here with me."

The Laird's ablutions (if he had indulged in any that morning) were evidently over for the day. He was breakfasting on a roll and butter, and coffee of his own brewing. He was deeply distressed at the sight of poor Trilby's sufferings and offered whisky and coffee and gingernuts, which she would not touch.

Svengali told her to sit down on the divan, and sat opposite to her, and bade her look him well in the white of the eyes.

" Recartez-moi pien tans le planc tes yeux."

Then he made little passes and counterpasses on her forehead and temples and down her cheek and neck. Soon her eyes closed and her face grew placid. After a while, a quarter of an hour perhaps, he asked her if she suffered still.

" Oh ! presque plus du tout, monsieur—c'est le ciel."

In a few minutes more he asked the Laird if he knew German.

" Just enough to understand," said the Laird (who had spent a year in Düsseldorf), and Svengali said to him in German : " See, she sleeps not, but she shall not open her eyes. Ask her."

" Are you asleep, Miss Trilby ? " asked the Laird.

" No."

" Then open your eyes and look at me."

She strained to open her eyes, but could not, and said so.

Then Svengali said, again in German, " She shall not open her mouth. Ask her."

" Why couldn't you open your eyes, Miss Trilby ? "

She strained to open her mouth and speak, but in vain.

" She shall not rise from the divan. Ask her."

But Trilby was spellbound, and could not move.

" I will now set her free," said Svengali.

And, lo ! she got up and waved her arms, and cried, " Vive la Prusse ! me v'là guérie ! " and in her gratitude she kissed Svengali's hand ; and he leered and showed his big brown teeth and the yellow whites at the top of his big black eyes, and drew his breath with a hiss.

" Now I'll go to Durien's and sit. How can I thank you, monsieur ? You have taken all my pain away."

" Yes, matemoiselle. I have got it myself ; it is in my elbows. But I love it, because it comes from you. Every time you have pain you shall come to me, Twelve, Rue Tire-Liard, au sixième au-dessus de l'entresol, and I will cure you and take your pain myself—"

" Oh, you are too good ! " And in her high spirits she turned round on her heel and uttered

her portentous war-cry, "Milk below!" The very rafters rang with it, and the piano gave out a solemn response.

"What is that you say, matemoiselle?"

"Oh, it's what the milkmen say in England."

"It is a wonderful cry, matemoiselle—*wunderschön!* It comes straight through the heart; it has its roots in the stomach and blossoms into music on the lips like the voice of Madame Alboni—voce sulle labbre! It is good production—c'est un cri du cœur!"

Trilby blushed with pride and pleasure.

"Yes, matemoiselle! I only know one person in the whole world who can produce the voice so well as you! I give you my word of honour."

"Who is it, monsieur—yourself?"

"Ach, no, matemoiselle; I have not that privilege. I have unfortunately no voice to produce. . . . It is a waiter at the Café de la Rotonde, in the Palais Royal; when you call for coffee, he says 'Boum!' in basso profondo. Tiefstimme—F moll below the line—it is phenomenal! It is like a cannon—a cannon also has very good production, matemoiselle. They pay him for it a thousand francs a year, because he brings many customers to the Café de la Rotonde, where the coffee isn't very good, although it costs three sous a cup dearer than at the Café Larsouille in the Rue Flambergeau-Vent. When he dies they will search all France for another, and then all Germany, where the good big waiters come from—and the cannons—but they will not find him, and the Café de la Rotonde will be bankrupt—unless you will consent to take his place. Will you permit that I shall look into your mouth, matemoiselle?"

She opened her mouth wide, and he looked into it.

"Himmel! the roof of your mouth is like the dome of the Panthéon; there is room in it for 'toutes les gloires de la France,' and a little to spare! The entrance to your throat is like the middle porch of St. Sulpice when the doors are open for the faithful on All Saints' Day; and not one tooth is missing—thirty-two British teeth as white as milk and as big as knuckle-bones! And your little tongue is scooped out like the leaf of a pink peony and the bridge of your nose is like the belly of a Stradivarius—what a sounding-board! And inside your beautiful big chest the lungs are made of leather! And your breath, it embalms, like the breath of a beautiful white heifer fed on the buttercups and daisies of the Vaterland! And you have a quick, soft, susceptible heart, a heart of gold, matemoiselle—all that sees itself in your face!

> "Votre cœur est un luth suspendu!
> Aussitôt qu'on le touche, il résonne. . . . .

What a pity you have not also the musical organisation!"

"Oh, but I *have*, monsieur; you heard me sing 'Ben Bolt,' didn't you? What makes you say that?"

Svengali was confused for a moment. Then he said: "When I play the 'Rosemonde' of Schubert, matemoiselle, you look another way and smoke a cigarette. . . . You look at the big Taffy, at the Little Billee, at the pictures on the walls or out of window, at the sky, the chimney-pots of Notre Dame de Paris; you do not look at Svengali—Svengali, who looks at you with all his eyes and plays you the 'Rosemonde' of Schubert!"

"Oh, mais ale!" exclaimed Trilby; "you *do* use lovely language!"

"But never mind, matemoiselle; when your pain arrives, then shall you come once more to Svengali, and he shall take it away from you and keep it himself for a soufenir of you when you are gone. And when you have it no more, he shall play you the 'Rosemonde' of Schubert, all alone for you; and then "Messieurs les étutiants, montez à la chaumière!' . . . because it is gayer! *And you shall see nothing, hear nothing, think of nothing but Svengali, Svengali, Svengali!*"

Here he felt his peroration to be so happy and effective that he thought it well to go at once and make a good exit. So he bent over Trilby's shapely freckled hand and kissed it, and bowed himself out of the room, without even borrowing his five-franc piece.

"He's a rum 'un, ain't he?" said Trilby. "He reminds me of a big hungry spider, and makes me feel like a fly! But he's cured my pain, he's cured my pain! Ah! you don't know what my pain is when it comes!"

"I wouldn't have much to do with him, all the same!" said the Laird. "I'd sooner have any pain than have it cured in that unnatural way and by such a man as that! He's a bad fellow, Svengali—I'm sure of it! He mesmerised you; that's what it is—mesmerism! I've often heard of it, but never seen it done before. They get you into their power and just make you do any blessed thing they please—lie, murder, steal—anything! and kill yourself into the bargain when they've done with you! It's just too terrible to think of!"

So spake the Laird, earnestly, solemnly, surprised out of his usual self, and most painfully impressed—and his own impressiveness grew upon him and impressed him still more. He loomed quite prophetic.

Cold shivers went down Trilby's back as she listened. She had a singularly impressionable nature, as was shown by her quick and ready susceptibility to Svengali's hypnotic influence. And all that day, as she posed for Durien (to whom she did not mention her adventure), she was haunted by the memory of Svengali's big eyes and the touch of his soft, dirty fingertips on her face and her fear and her repulsion grew together.

And "Svengali, Svengali, Svengali!" went ringing in her head and ears till it became an obsession, a dirge, a knell, an unendurable burden, almost as hard to bear as the pain in her eyes.

"*Svengali, Svengali, Svengali!*"

"CHEZ CARREL."

Carrel's atelier (or painting-school) was in the Rue Notre Dames des Potirons St. Michel, at the end of a large courtyard, where there were many large dirty windows facing north and each window let the light of heaven into a large dirty studio.

The largest of these studios, and the dirtiest, was Carrel's, where some thirty or forty art students drew and painted from the nude model every day but Sunday from eight till twelve, and for two hours in the afternoon, except on Saturdays, when the afternoon was devoted to much-needed Augean sweepings and cleanings.

One week the model was male, the next female, and so on, alternating throughout the year.

A stove, a model-throne, stools, boxes, some fifty strongly-built low chairs with backs, a couple of score easels and many drawing-boards, completed the *mobilier*.

The bare walls were adorned with endless caricatures—*des charges*—in charcoal and white chalk; and also the scrapings of many palettes—a polychromous decoration not unpleasing.

For the freedom of the studio and the use of the model each student paid ten francs a month to the *massier*, or senior student, the responsible bell-wether of the flock; besides this, it was expected of you, on your entrance or initiation, that you should pay for your footing—your *bienvenue*—some thirty, forty, or fifty francs, to be spent on cakes and rum punch all round.

Every Friday Monsieur Carrel, a great artist, and also a stately, well-dressed and most courteous gentleman (duly decorated with the red rosette of the Legion of Honour) came for two or three hours and went the round, spending a few minutes at each drawing-board or easel—ten or even twelve when the pupil was an industrious and promising one.

He did this for love, not money, and deserved all the reverence with which he inspired this somewhat irreverent and most unruly company, which was made up of all sorts.

Greybeards who had been drawing and painting there for thirty years and more and remembered other masters than Carrel, and who could draw and paint a torso almost as well as Titian or Velasquez—almost, but not quite—and who could never do anything else and were fixtures at Carrel's for life.

Younger men who in a year or two, or three or five, or ten or twenty, were bound to make their mark and perhaps follow in the footsteps of the master; others as conspicuously singled out for failure and future mischance—for the hospital, the garret, the river, the Morgue, or, worse, the traveller's bag, the road, or even the paternal counter.

Irresponsible boys, mere *rapins*, all laugh and chaff and mischief—*blagues et bagout Parisien*; little lords of misrule—wits, butts, bullies; the idle and industrious apprentice, the good and the bad, the clean and the dirty (especially the latter)—all more or less animated by a certain *esprit de corps*, and working very happily and genially together, on the whole, and always willing to help each other with sincere artistic counsel if it was asked for seriously, though it was not always couched in terms very flattering to one's self-love.

Before Little Billee became one of this band of brothers he had been working for three or four years in a London art school, drawing and painting from the life; he had also worked from the antique in the British Museum—so that he was no novice.

As he made his début at Carrel's one Monday morning he felt somewhat shy and ill at ease. He had studied French most earnestly at home in England, and could read it pretty well and even write it and speak it after a fashion; but he spoke it with much difficulty and found studio French a different language altogether from the formal and polite language he had been at such pains to acquire. Ollendorff does not cater for the Quartier Latin. Acting on Taffy's advice—for Taffy had worked under Carrel—Little Billee handed sixty francs to the *massier* for his *bienvenue*—a lordly sum—and this liberality made a most favourable impression and went far to destroy any little prejudice that might have been caused by the daintiness of his dress, the cleanliness of his person and the politeness of his manners. A place was assigned to him and an easel and a board; for he elected to stand at his work and begin with a chalk drawing. The model (a male) was posed, and work began in silence. Monday morning is always rather sulky everywhere (except, perhaps, in Judee). During the ten minutes rest three or four students came and looked at Little Billee's beginnings and saw at a glance that he thoroughly well knew what he was about, and respected him for it.

Nature had given him a singularly light hand—or rather, two, for he was ambidextrous, and could use both with equal skill; and a few months' practice at a London life school had quite cured him of that purposeless indecision of touch which often characterises the prentice hand for years of apprenticeship, and remains with the amateur for life. The lightest and most careless of his pencil strokes had a precision that was inimitable and a charm that specially belonged to him and was easy to recognise at a glance. His touch on either canvas or paper was like Svengali's on the keyboard—unique.

As the morning ripened little attempts at

conversation were made—little breakings of the ice of silence. It was Lambert, a youth with a singularly facetious face, who first woke the stillness with the following uncalled-for remarks in English, very badly pronounced:

"Av you seen my fahzere's ole shoes?"

"I av not seen your fahzere's old shoes."

Then, after a pause:

"Av you seen my fahzere's ole 'at?"

"I av not seen your fahzere's ole 'at!"

Presently another said, "Je trouve qu'il a une jolie tête, l'Anglais."

But I will put it all into English:

"I find that he has a pretty head—the Englishman! What say *you*, Barizel?"

"Yes; but why has he got eyes like brandy-balls, two a penny?"

"Because he's an Englishman!"

Little Billee, conscious that he was the subject of conversation, grew somewhat nervous. Soon he was addressed directly.

"Dites donc, l'Anglais?"

"Kwaw?" said Little Billee.

"Avez-vous une sœur?"

"Wee."

"Est-ce qu'elle vous ressemble?"

"Nong."

"C'est bien dommage! Est-ce qu'elle dit ses prières, le soir, en se couchant?"

A fierce look came into Little Billee's eyes and a redness to his cheeks, and this particular form of overture to friendship was abandoned.

Presently Lambert said, "Si nous mettions l'Anglais à l'échelle?"

Little Billee, who had been warned, knew what this ordeal meant.

They tied you to a ladder and carried you in procession up and down the courtyard and if you were nasty about it they put you under the pump.

During the next rest it was explained to him that he must submit to this indignity, and the ladder (which was used for reaching the high shelves round the studio) was got ready.

Little Billee smiled a singularly winning smile and suffered himself to be bound with such good humour that they voted it wasn't amusing, and unbound him, and he escaped the ordeal by ladder.

When it struck twelve, the cakes and rum punch arrived—a very goodly sight that put everyone in a good temper.

They dragged the model-throne into the middle and a chair was put on for Little Billee, who dispensed his hospitality in a very polite and attractive manner, helping the *massier* first, and then the other greybeards in the order of their greyness, and so on down to the model.

Presently, just as he was about to help himself, he was asked to sing them an English song. After a little pressing he sang them a song about a gay cavalier who went to serenade his mistress (and a ladder of ropes and a pair of masculine gloves that didn't belong to the gay cavalier, but which he found in his lady's bower)—a poor sort of song but it was the nearest approach to a comic song he knew. There are four verses to it and each verse is rather long. It does not sound at all funny to a French audience, and even with an English one Little Billee was not good at comic songs.

He was, however, much applauded at the end of each verse. When he had finished, he was asked if he were *quite* sure there wasn't any more of it and they expressed a deep regret, and then each student, straddling on his little thick-set chair as on a horse and clasping the back of it in both hands, galloped round Little Billee's throne quite seriously—the strangest procession he had ever seen. It made him laugh till he cried, so that he could not eat or drink.

Then he served more punch and cake all round, and just as he was going to begin himself, Papelard said:

"Say, you others, I find that the Englishman has something of truly distinguished in the voice, something of sympathetic, of touching—something of *je ne sais quoi!*"

Bouchardy: "Yes, yes—something of *je ne sais quoi!* That's the very phrase—n'est-ce pas, vous autres?—that is a good phrase that Papelard has just invented to describe the voice of the Englishman. He is very intelligent—Papelard."

Chorus: "Perfect, perfect; he has the genius of characterisation—Papelard. Dites donc, l'Anglais! once more that beautiful song—*hein?* Nous vous en prions tous."

Little Billee willingly sang it again, with even greater applause, and again they galloped, but the other way round and faster, so that Little Billee became quite hysterical and laughed till his sides ached.

Such was Little Billee's first experience of Carrel's studio, where he spent many happy mornings and made many good friends.

No more popular student had ever worked there within the memory of the greyest greybeards; none more amiable, more genial, more cheerful, self-respecting, considerate and polite, and certainly none with greater gifts for art.

Carrel would devote at least fifteen minutes to him and invited him often to his own private studio. And often, on the fourth or fifth day of the week, a group of admiring students would be gathered by his easel watching him as he worked.

"C'est un rude lapin, l'Anglais! au moins il sait son orthographe en peinture, ce coco-là!"

Such was the verdict on Little Billee at Carrel's studio; and I can conceive no much loftier praise.

¶

YOUNG as she was (seventeen or eighteen, or thereabouts), and also tender (like Little Billee), Trilby had singularly clear and quick

perceptions in all matters that concerned her tastes, fancies or affections, and thoroughly knew her own mind and never lost much time in making it up.

On the occasion of her first visit to the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts it took her just five minutes to decide that it was quite the nicest, homeliest, genialest, jolliest studio in the whole Quartier Latin, or out of it, and its three inhabitants, individually and collectively, were more to her taste than anyone else she had ever met.

In the first place, they were English, and she loved to hear her mother-tongue and speak it. It awoke all manner of tender recollections, sweet reminiscences of her childhood, her parents, her old home—such a home as it was—or, rather, such homes, for there had been many flittings from one poor nest to another. The O'Ferralls had been as birds on the bough.

She had loved her parents very dearly; and, indeed, with all their faults, they had endearing qualities—the qualities that so often go with those particular faults—charm, geniality, kindness, warmth of heart, the constant wish to please, the generosity that comes before justice and lends its last sixpence and forgets to pay its debts!

She knew other English and American artists and had sat to them frequently for the head and hands, but none of these, for general agreeableness of aspect or manner, could compare in her mind with the stalwart and magnificent Taffy, the jolly fat Laird of Cockpen, the refined, sympathetic and elegant Little Billee; and she resolved that she would see as much of them as she could, that she would make herself at home in that particular studio and necessary to its *locataires;* and without being the least bit vain or self-conscious, she had no doubts whatever of her power to please—to make herself both useful and ornamental if it suited her purpose to do so.

Her first step in this direction was to borrow Père Martin's basket and lantern and pick (he had more than one set of these trade properties) for the use of Taffy, whom she feared she might have offended by the freedom of her comments on his picture.

Then, as often as she felt it to be discreet, she sounded her war-cry at the studio door and went in and made kind enquiries and, sitting cross-legged on the model-throne, ate her bread and cheese and smoked her cigarette and "passed the time of day," as she chose to call it, telling them all such news of the Quartier as had come within her own immediate ken. She was always full of little stories of other studios, which, to do her justice, were always good-natured and probably true—quite so, as far as she was concerned; she was the most literal person alive, and she told all these *ragots, cancans, et potins d'atelier* in a quaint and amusing manner. The slightest look of gravity or boredom on one of those three faces and she made herself scarce at once.

She soon found opportunities for usefulness also. If a costume were wanted, for instance, she knew where to borrow it or hire it or buy it cheaper than anyone anywhere else. She procured stuffs for them at cost price, as it seemed, and made them into draperies and female garments of any kind that was wanted, and sat in them for the toreador's sweetheart (she made the mantilla herself), for Taffy's starving dressmaker about to throw herself into the Seine, for Little Billee's studies of the beautiful French peasant girl in his picture, now so famous, called "The Pitcher Goes to the Well."

Then she darned their socks and mended their clothes and got all their washing done properly and cheaply at her friend Madame Boisse's, in the Rue des Cloîtres Ste. Pétronille.

And then again, when they were hard up and wanted a good round sum of money for some little pleasure excursion, such as a trip to Fontainebleau or Barbizon for two or three days, it was she who took their watches and scarf-pins and things to the Mount of Piety in the Street of the Well of Love (where dwelt *ma tante*, which is French for "my uncle" in this connection), in order to raise the necessary funds.

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She was, of course, most liberally paid for all these little services, rendered with such pleasure and goodwill—far too liberally, she thought. She would have been really happier doing them for love.

Thus in a very short time she became a *persona gratissima*—a sunny and ever-welcome vision of health and grace and liveliness and unalterable good humour, always ready to take any trouble to please her beloved "Angliches," as they were called by Madame Vinard, the handsome shrill-voiced *concierge*, who was almost jealous; for she was devoted to the Angliches, too—and so was Monsieur Vinard—and so were the little Vinards.

She knew when to talk and when to laugh and when to hold her tongue; and the sight of her sitting cross-legged on the model-throne darning the Laird's socks or sewing buttons on his shirts or repairing the smoke-holes in his trousers was so pleasant that it was painted by all three. One of these sketches (in water-colour by Little Billee) sold the other day at Christie's for a sum so large that I hardly dare to mention it. It was done in an afternoon.

Sometimes on a rainy day, when it was decided they should dine at home, she would fetch the food and cook it and lay the cloth and even make the salad. She was a better saladist than Taffy, a better cook than the Laird, a better caterer than Little Billee. And she would be invited to take her share in the banquet. And on these occasions her tremulous happiness was so immense that it would be quite pathetic to see—almost painful; and their three British hearts were touched by thoughts of all the loneliness and homelessness, the expatriation, the half-conscious loss of caste, that all this eager childish clinging revealed.

And that is why (no doubt) that with all this familiar intimacy there was never any hint of gallantry or flirtation in any shape or form whatever—*bonne camaraderie voilà tout*. Had she been Little Billee's sister she could not have been treated with more real respect. And her deep gratitude for this unwonted compliment transcended any passion she had ever felt. As the good Lafontaine so prettily says—

> "Ces animaux vivaient entre eux comme cousins;
> Cette union si douce, et presque fraternelle,
> Edifiait tous les voisins!"

And then their talk! It was to her as the talk of the gods in Olympus, save that it was easier to understand and she could always understand it. For she was a very intelligent person, in spite of her woefully neglected education, and most ambitious to learn—a new ambition for her.

So they lent her books—English books: Dickens, Thackeray, Walter Scott—which she devoured in the silence of the night, the solitude of her little attic in the Rue des Pousse-Cailloux, and new worlds were revealed to her. She grew more English every day; and that was a good thing.

Trilby speaking English and Trilby speaking French were two different beings. Trilby's English was more or less that of her father, a highly-educated man; her mother, who was a Scotchwoman, although an uneducated one, had none of the ungainliness that mars the speech of so many Englishwomen in that humble rank—no droppings of the *h*, no broadening of the *o*'s and *a*'s.

Trilby's French was that of the Quartier Latin—droll, slangy, piquant, quaint, picturesque—quite the reverse of ungainly, but in which there was scarcely a turn of phrase that would not stamp the speaker as being hopelessly, emphatically "no lady!" Though it was funny without being vulgar, it was perhaps a little *too* funny!

And she handled her knife and fork in the dainty English way, as no doubt her father had done—and his; and, indeed, when alone with them she was so absolutely "like a lady" that it seemed quite odd (though very seductive) to see her in a grisette's cap and dress and apron. So much for her English training.

But enter a Frenchman or two, and a transformation effected itself immediately—a new incarnation of Trilbyness—so droll and amusing that it was difficult to decide which of her two incarnations was the more attractive.

It must be admitted that she had her faults—like Little Billee.

For instance, she would be miserably jealous of any other woman who came to the studio, to sit or scrub or sweep or do anything else, even of the dirty tipsy old hag who sat for Taffy's "Found Drowned"—"as if she couldn't have sat for it herself!"

And then she would be cross and sulky, but not for long—an injured martyr, soon ready to forgive and be forgiven.

She would give up any sitting to come and sit to her three English friends. Even Durien had serious cause for complaint.

Then her affection was exacting: she always wanted to be told one was fond of her, and she dearly loved her own way, even in the sewing on of buttons and the darning of socks, which was innocent enough. But when it came to the cutting and fashioning of garments for a toreador's bride, it was a nuisance not to be borne!

"What could *she* know of toreadors' brides and their wedding-dresses?" the Laird would indignantly ask—as if he were a toreador himself; and this was the aggravating side of her irrepressible Trilbyness.

In the caressing, demonstrative tenderness of her friendship she "made the soft eyes" at all three indiscriminately. But sometimes Little Billee would look up from his work as she was sitting to Taffy or the Laird and find her grey eyes fixed on him with an all-enfolding gaze,

so piercingly, penetratingly, unutterably sweet and kind and tender, such a brooding, dovelike look of soft and warm solicitude, that he would feel a flutter at his heart and his hand would shake so that he could not paint; and in a waking dream he would remember that his mother had often looked at him like that when he was a small boy and she a beautiful young woman untouched by care or sorrow; and the tear that always lay in readiness so close to the corner of Little Billee's eye would find it very difficult to keep itself in its proper place—unshed.

And at such moments the thought that Trilby sat for the figure would go through him like a knife.

She did not sit promiscuously to anybody who asked, it is true. But she still sat to Durien; to the great Gérôme; to M. Carrel, who scarcely used any other model.

It was poor Trilby's sad distinction that she surpassed all other models as Calypso surpassed her nymphs; and whether by long habit or through some obtuseness in her nature, or lack of imagination, she was equally unconscious of self with her clothes on or without! Truly, she could be naked and unashamed—in this respect an absolute savage.

She would have ridden through Coventry, like Lady Godiva—but without giving it a thought beyond wondering why the streets were empty and the shops closed and the blinds pulled down—would even have looked up to Peeping Tom's shutter with a friendly nod, had she known he was behind it.

In fact she was absolutely without that kind of shame, as she was without any kind of fear. But she was destined soon to know both fear and shame.

And here it would not be amiss for me to state a fact well known to all painters and sculptors who have used the nude model (except a few shady pretenders, whose purity, not being of the right sort, has gone rank from too much watching), namely, that nothing is so chaste as nudity. Venus herself, as she drops her garments and steps on to the model-throne, leaves behind her on the floor every weapon in her armoury by which she can pierce to the grosser passions of man. The more perfect her unveiled beauty, the more keenly it appeals to his higher instincts. And where her beauty fails (as it almost always does somewhere in the Venuses who sit for hire), the failure is so lamentably conspicuous in the studio light—the fierce light that beats on this particular throne—that Don Juan himself, who has not got to paint, were fain to hide his eyes in sorrow and disenchantment, and fly to other climes.

All beauty is sexless in the eyes of the artist at his work—the beauty of man, the beauty of woman, the heavenly beauty of the child, which is the sweetest and best of all.

Indeed it is woman, whose beauty falls the shortest, for sheer lack of proper physical training.

As for Trilby, G——, to whom she sat for his Phryne, once told me that the sight of her thus was a thing to melt Sir Galahad, yet sober Silenus and chasten Jove himself—a thing to Quixotise a modern French masher! I can well believe him. For myself, I only speak of Trilby as I have seen her—clothed and in her right mind. She never sat to me for any Phryne, never bared herself to me, nor did I ever dream of asking her. I would as soon have asked the Queen of Spain to let me paint her legs! But I have worked from many female models in many countries, some of them the best of their kind. I have also, like Svengali, seen Taffy "trying to get himself clean," either at home or in the swimming-baths of the Seine; and never a sitting woman among them all who could match for grace or finish or splendour of outward form that mighty Yorkshireman sitting in his tub, or sunning himself, like Ilyssus, at the Bains Henri Quatre, or taking his running header *à la hussarde*, off the springboard at the Bains Deligny, with a group of wondering Frenchmen gathered round.

Up he shot himself into mid-air with a sounding double downward kick, parabolically; then, turning a splendid semi-demi-somersault against the sky, down he came headlong, his body straight and stiff as an arrow, and made his clean hole in the water without splash or sound, to reappear a hundred yards farther on!

"Sac à papier! quel gaillard que cet Anglais, hein?"

"A-t-on jamais vu un torse pareil!"

"Et les bras, donc!"

"Et les jambes, nom d'un tonnerre!"

"Mâtin! J'aimerais mieux être en colère contre lui qu'il ne soit en colère contre moi!" etc., etc., etc.

Omne ignotum pro magnifico!

If our climate were such that we could go about without any clothes on, we probably should; in which case, although we should still murder and lie and steal and bear false witness against our neighbour and break the Sabbath Day and take the Lord's name in vain, much deplorable wickedness of another kind would cease to exist for sheer lack of mystery; and Christianity would be relieved of its hardest task in this sinful world and Venus Aphrodite (*alias* Aselgeia) would have to go a-begging along with the tailors and dressmakers and bootmakers and perhaps our bodies and limbs would be as those of the Theseus and Venus of Milo, who was no Venus except in good looks!

At all events, there would be no cunning, cruel deceptions, no artful taking in of artless inexperience, no unduly hurried waking-up from Love's young dream, no handing down to posterity of hidden uglinesses and weaknesses, and worse!

And here let me humbly apologise to the casual reader for the length and possible irrelevancy of this digression and for its subject.

To those who may find matter for sincere disapprobation or even grave offence in a thing that has always seemed to me so simple, so commonplace, as to be hardly worth talking or writing about, I can only plead a sincerity equal to theirs and as deep a love and reverence for the gracious, goodly shape that God is said to have made after His own image for inscrutable purposes of His own.

Nor, indeed, am I pleading for such a subversive and revolutionary measure as the wholesale abolition of clothes, being the chilliest of mortals and quite unlike Mr. Theseus or Mr. Ilyssus either.

¶

SOMETIMES Trilby would bring her little brother to the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, in his *beaux habits de Pâques*, his hair well curled, his hands and face well washed.

He was a very engaging little mortal. The Laird would fill his pockets full of Scotch goodies and paint him as a little Spaniard in "Le Fils du Toréador," a sweet little Spaniard with blue eyes and curly locks as light as tow and a complexion of milk and roses, in singular and piquant contrast to his swarthy progenitors.

Taffy would use him as an Indian club or a dumb-bell, to the child's infinite delight, and swing him on the trapeze and teach him *la boxe*.

And the sweetness and fun of his shrill, happy, infantile laughter (which was like an echo of Trilby's, only an octave higher) so moved and touched and tickled one that Taffy had to look quite fierce so he might hide the strange delight of tenderness that somehow filled his manly bosom at the mere sound of it (lest Little Billee and the Laird should think him goody-goody); and the fiercer Taffy looked, the less this small mite was afraid of him.

Little Billee made a beautiful water-colour sketch of him, just as he was, and gave it to Trilby, who gave it to le père Martin, who gave it to his wife with strict injunctions not to sell it as an old master. Alas! it *is* an old master now, and Heaven only knows who has got it!

Those were happy days for Trilby's little brother, happy days for Trilby, who was immensely fond of him and very proud. And the happiest day of all was when the *trois* Angliches took Trilby and Jeannot (for so the mite was called) to spend the Sunday in the woods at Meudon, and breakfast and dine at the *garde champêtre's*. Swings, peep-shows, donkey-rides; shooting at a mark with cross-bows and little pellets of clay and smashing little plaster figures and winning macaroons; losing one's self in the beautiful forest; catching newts and tadpoles and young frogs; making music on *mirlitons*. Trilby singing "Ben Bolt" into a *mirliton* was a thing to be remembered, whether one would or no!

Trilby on this occasion came out in a new character, *en demoiselle*, with a little black bonnet and a grey jacket of her own making.

To look at (but for her loose, square-toed, heel-less silk boots laced up the inner side), she might have been the daughter of an English dean—until she undertook to teach the Laird some favourite cancan steps. And then the Laird himself, it must be admitted, no longer looked like the son of a worthy, God-fearing, Sabbath-keeping Scotch solicitor.

This was after dinner, in the garden, at *la loge du garde champêtre*. Taffy and Jeannot and Little Billee made the necessary music on their *mirlitons* and the dancing soon became general, with plenty also to look on, for the *garde* had many customers who dined there on summer Sundays.

It is no exaggeration to say that Trilby was far and away the belle of that particular ball and there have been worse balls in much finer company, and far plainer women!

Trilby lightly dancing the cancan (there are cancans and cancans) was a singularly gainly and seductive person—*et vera incessu patuit dea!* Here, again, she was funny without being vulgar. And for mere grace (even in the cancan), she was the forerunner of Miss Kate Vaughan; and for sheer fun, the precursor of Miss Nelly Farren!

And the Laird, trying to dance after her ("dongsong le konkong," as he called it), was too funny for words; and if genuine popular success is a true test of humour, no greater humorist ever danced a *pas seul*.

Then one fine day (as a judgment on him, no doubt), the Laird fell ill and the doctor had to be sent for, and he ordered a nurse. But Trilby would hear of no nurses, not even a Sister of Charity! She did all the nursing herself and never slept a wink for three successive days and nights.

On the third day the Laird was out of all danger, the delirium was past, and the doctor found poor Trilby fast asleep by the bedside.

Madame Vinard, at the bedroom door, put her finger to her lips and whispered: "Quel bonheur! il est sauvé, M. le Docteur; écoutez! il dit ses prières en Anglais, ce brave garçon!"

The good old doctor, who didn't understand a word of English, listened, and heard the Laird's voice, weak and low, but quite clear, and full of heartfelt fervour, intoning solemnly:

"Green herbs, red peppers, mussels, saffron;
Soles, onions, garlic, roach and dace—
All these you eat at Terré's Tavern
In that one dish of bouillabaisse!"

Sceptic and Voltairian as he was, and not the friend of prayer, the good doctor was touched, for he was old, and therefore kind and tolerant, and made allowances.

And afterwards he said such sweet things to Trilby about it all and about her admirable care of his patient, that she positively wept with delight—like sweet Alice with hair so brown, whenever Ben Bolt gave her a smile.

All this sounds very goody-goody, but it's true.

So it will be easily understood how the *trois* Angliches came in time to feel for Trilby quite a peculiar regard, and looked forward with sorrowful forebodings to the day when this singular and pleasant little quartet would have to be broken up, each of them to spread his wings and fly away on his own account, and poor Trilby to be left behind all by herself. They would even frame little plans whereby she might better herself in life, and avoid the many snares and pitfalls that would beset her lonely path in the Quartier Latin when they were gone.

Trilby never thought of such things as these; she troubled herself about no morrows.

There was, however, one jarring figure in her little fool's paradise, a baleful and most ominous figure that constantly crossed her path and came between her and the sun, and threw its shadow over her, and that was Svengali.

He also was a frequent visitor at the studio in the Place St. Anatole, where much was forgiven him for the sake of his music, especially when he came with Gecko and they made music together. But it soon became apparent that they did not come there to play to the three Angliches; it was to see Trilby, whom they both had taken it into their heads to adore, each in a different fashion:

Gecko, with a humble, doglike worship that expressed itself in mute, pathetic deference and looks of lowly self-depreciation, of apology for his own unworthy existence, as though the only requital he would ever dare to dream of were a word of decent politeness, a glance of tolerance or goodwill—a mere bone to a dog.

Svengali was a bolder wooer. When he cringed it was with a mock humility full of sardonic threats; when he was playful it was with a terrible playfulness, like that of a cat with a mouse—a weird, ungainly cat, and most unclean; a sticky, haunting, long, lean, uncanny, black spider-cat, if there is such an animal outside a bad dream.

It was a great grievance to him that she had suffered from no more pains in her eyes. She had; but preferred to endure them rather than seek relief from *him*.

So he would playfully try to mesmerise her with his glance and sidle up nearer and nearer to her, making passes and counter-passes, with stern command in his eyes, till she would shake and shiver and almost sicken with fear and all but feel the spell come over her, as in a nightmare, and rouse herself with a great effort and escape.

If Taffy were there he would interfere with a friendly "Now then, old fellow, none of that!" and a jolly slap on the back which would make Svengali cough for an hour and paralyse his mesmeric powers for a week.

Svengali had a stroke of good fortune. He played at three grand concerts with Gecko and had a well-deserved success. He even gave a concert of his own, which made a furore, and blossomed out into beautiful and costly clothes of quite original colour and shape and pattern, so that people would turn round and stare at him in the street—a thing he loved. He felt his fortune was secure, and ran into debt with tailors, hatters, shoe-makers, jewellers, but paid none of his old debts to his friends. His pockets were always full of printed slips—things that had been written about him in the papers—and he would read them aloud to everybody he knew, especially to Trilby, as she sat darning socks on the model-throne while the fencing and boxing were in train. And he would lay his fame and his fortune at her feet, on condition that she should share her life with him.

"Ach, himmel, Drilpy!" he would say, "you don't know what it is to be a great pianist like me—*hein?* What is your Little Billee, with his stinking oil-bladders, sitting mum in his corner, his mahlstick and his palette in one hand and his twiddling little footle pig's-hair brush in the other! What noise does *he* make? When his little fool of a picture is finished he will send it to London and they will hang it on a wall with a lot of others, all in a line, like recruits called out for inspection, and the yawning public will walk by in procession and inspect and say 'damn!' Svengali will go to London *himself*. Ha! ha! He will be all alone on a platform and play as nobody else can play; and hundreds of beautiful Engländerinnen will see and hear and go mad with love for him—Prinzessen, Comtessen, Serene English Altessen. They will soon lose their Serenity and their Highness when they hear Svengali! They will invite him to their palaces and pay him a thousand francs to play for them; and after, he will loll in the best armchair and they will sit all round him on footstools and bring him tea and gin and *küchen* and *marrons glacés*, and lean over him and fan him—for he is tired after playing them for a thousand francs of Chopin! Ha, ha! I know all about it—*hein?*

"And he will not look at them, even! He will look inward, at his own dream—and his dream will be about Drilpy—to lay his talent, his glory, his thousand francs at her beautiful white feet!

"Their stupid, big, fat, tow-headed, putty-nosed husbands will be mad with jealousy and long to box him, but they will be afraid. Ach! those beautiful Anclaises! they will think it an honour to mend his shirts, to sew buttons on his pantaloons; to darn his socks, as you are doing now for that sacred imbecile of a Scotchman who is always trying to paint toréadors, or that sweating, pig-headed bullock of an Englander who is always trying to get himself dirty and then to get himself clean again!—*e da capo!*

"Himmel! what big socks are those! what potatosacks!

"Look at your Taffy! What is he good for but to bang great musicians on the back with his big bear's paw! He finds that droll, the bullock! . . .

"Look at your Frenchmen there—your damned conceited *verfluchte* pig-dogs of Frenchmen—Durien, Barizel, Bouchardy! What can a Frenchman talk of, *hein?* Only himself, and run down everybody else! His vanity makes me sick! He always thinks the world is talking about *him*, the fool! He forgets that there is a fellow called *Svengali* for the world to talk about! I tell you, Drilpy, it is about *me* the world is talking—me and nobody else.

"Listen what they say in the *Figaro* (reads it).

"What do you think of that, *hein?* What would your Durien say if people wrote of *him* like that?

"But you are not listening, sapperment! great big she-fool that you are—sheep's-head! Dummkopf! Donnerwetter! you are looking at the chimney-pots when Svengali talks! Look a little lower down between the houses, on the other side of the river! There is a little ugly grey building there and inside are eight slanting slabs of brass, all of a row, like beds in a school dormitory, and one fine day you shall lie asleep on one of those slabs—you, Drilpy, who would not listen to Svengali, and therefore lost him! . . . And over the middle of you will be a little leather apron, and over your head a little brass tap, and all day long and all night the cold water shall trickle, trickle, trickle all the way down your beautiful white body to your beautiful white feet till they turn green, and your poor, damp, draggled, muddy rags will hang above you from the ceiling for your friends to know you by; drip, drip, drip! But you will have no friends. . . .

"And people of all sorts, strangers, will stare at you through the big plate-glass window—Englanders, chiffonniers, painters and sculptors, workmen, piou-pious, old hags of washerwomen—and say, 'Ah! what a beautiful woman was that! Look at her! She ought to be rolling in her carriage and pair!' And just then who should come by, rolling in his carriage and pair, smothered in furs and smoking a big cigar of the Havana, but Svengali, who will jump out and push the canaille aside and say, 'Ha! ha! that is la grande Drilpy, who would not listen to Svengali, but looked at the chimney-pots when he told her of his manly love and——"

"Hi! damn it, Svengali, what the devil are you talking to Trilby about? You're making her sick; can't you see? Leave off and go to the piano, man, or I'll come and slap you on the back again!"

Thus would that sweating, pig-headed bullock of an Englander stop Svengali's love-making and release Trilby from bad quarters of an hour.

Then Svengali, who had a wholesome dread of the pig-headed bullock, would go to the piano and make impossible discords and say: "Dear Drilpy, come and sing 'Pen Polt! I am thirsting for those so beautiful chest notes! Come!'

Poor Trilby needed little pressing when she was asked to sing, and would go through her lamentable performance, to the great discomfort of Little Billee. It lost nothing of its grotesqueness from Svengali's accompaniment, which was a triumph of cacophony, and he would encourage her—*Très pien, très pien, ça y est!*

When it was over, Svengali would test her ear, as he called it, and strike the C in the middle and then the F just above, and ask which was the highest; and she would declare they were both exactly the same. It was only when he struck a note in the bass and another in the treble that she could perceive any difference and said that the first sounded like Père Martin blowing up his wife and the second like her little godson trying to make the peace between them.

She was quite tone-deaf and didn't know it; and he would pay her extravagant compliments on her musical talent, till Taffy would say, "Look here, Svengali, let's hear *you* sing a song!"

And he would tickle him so masterfully under the ribs that the creature howled and became quite hysterical.

Then Svengali would vent his love of teasing on Little Billee and pin his arms behind his back and swing him round, saying: "Himmel! what's this for an arm? It's like a girl's!"

"It's strong enough to paint!" said Little Billee.

"And what's this for a leg? It's like a mahlstick!"

"It's strong enough to kick, if you don't leave off!"

And Little Billee, the young and tender, would let out his little heel and kick the German's shins; and just as the German was going to retaliate, big Taffy would pin *his* arms and make him sing another song, more discordant than Trilby's—for he didn't dream of kicking Taffy; of that you may be sure!

Such was Svengali—only to be endured for the sake of his music—always ready to vex, frighten, bully or torment anybody or anything smaller and weaker than himself—from a woman or a child to a mouse or a fly.

CHAPTER III

ONE lovely Monday morning in late September, at about eleven or so, Taffy and the Laird sat in the studio—each opposite his picture, smoking, nursing his knee and saying nothing. The heaviness of Monday weighed on their spirits more than usual, for the three friends had returned late on the previous night from a week spent at Barbizon and in the forest of Fontainebleau—a heavenly week among the

painters; Rousseau, Millet, Corot, Daubigny, let us suppose, and others less known to fame this day. Little Billee, especially, had been fascinated by all this artistic life in blouses and sabots and immense straw hats and panamas, and had sworn to himself and to his friends that he would some day live and die there—painting the forest as it is and peopling it with beautiful people out of his own fancy—leading a healthy outdoor life of simple wants and lofty aspirations.

At length Taffy said, "Bother work this morning! I feel much more like a stroll in the Luxembourg Gardens and lunch at the Café de l'Odéon, where the omelets are good and the wine isn't blue."

"The very thing I was thinking of myself," said the Laird.

So Taffy slipped on his old shooting-jacket and his old Harrow cricket cap, with the peak turned the wrong way, and the Laird put on an old greatcoat of Taffy's that reached to his heels and a battered straw hat they had found in the studio when they took it, and both sallied forth into the mellow sunshine on the way to Carrel's. For they meant to seduce Little Billee from his work, that he might share in their laziness, greediness, and general demoralisation.

And whom should they meet coming down the narrow turreted Rue Vielle des Trois Mauvais Ladres but Little Billee himself, with an air of general demoralisation so tragic that they were quite alarmed. He had his paintbox and field-easel in one hand and his little valise in the other. He was pale, his hat on the back of his head, his hair staring all at sixes and sevens, like a sick Scotch terrier's.

"Good Lord! what's the matter?" said Taffy.

"Oh! oh! oh! she's sitting at Carrel's!"

"Who's sitting at Carrel's?"

"Trilby! sitting to all those ruffians! There she was, just as I opened the door; I saw her, I tell you! The sight of her was like a blow between the eyes, and I bolted! I shall never go back to that beastly hole again! I'm off to Barbizon, to paint the forest; I was coming round to tell you. Good-bye! . . ."

"Stop a minute—are you mad?" said Taffy, collaring him.

"Let me go, Taffy—let me go, damn it! I'll come back in a week—but I'm going now! Let me go; do you hear?"

"But look here—I'll go with you."

"No; I want to be alone—quite alone. Let me go, I tell you!"

"I shan't let you go unless you swear to me, on your honour, that you'll write directly you get there, and every day till you come back. Swear!"

"All right; I swear—honour bright! Now there! Good-bye—good-bye; back on Sunday. Good-bye!" And he was off.

"Now, what the devil does all that mean?" asked Taffy, much perturbed.

"I suppose he's shocked at seeing Trilby in that guise, or disguise, or unguise, sitting at Carrel's—he's such an odd little chap. And I must say, I'm surprised at Trilby. It's a bad thing for her when we're away. What could have induced her? She never sat in a studio of that kind before. I thought she only sat to Durien and old Carrel."

They walked for a while in silence.

"Do you know, I've got a horrid idea that the little fool's in love with her!"

"I've long had a horrid idea that *she's* in love with *him*."

"That would be a very stupid business," said Taffy.

They walked on, brooding over those two horrid ideas, and the more they brooded, considered, and remembered, the more convinced they became that both were right.

"Here's a pretty kettle of fish!" said the Laird—"and talking of fish, let's go and lunch."

And so demoralised were they that Taffy ate three omelets without thinking, and the Laird drank two half-bottles of wine, and Taffy three, and they walked about the whole of that afternoon for fear Trilby should come to the studio—and were very unhappy.

This is how Trilby came to sit at Carrel's studio:

Carrel had suddenly taken it into his head that he would spend a week there and paint a figure among his pupils, that they might see and paint with—and if possible like—him. And he had asked Trilby as a great favour to be the model, and Trilby was so devoted to the great Carrel that she readily consented. So that Monday morning found her there, and Carrel posed her as Ingres's famous figure in his picture called "La Source," holding an earthenware pitcher on her shoulder.

And the work began in religious silence. Then in five minutes or so Little Billee came bursting in, and as soon as he caught sight of her he stopped and stood as one petrified, his shoulders up, his eyes staring. Then lifting his arms, he turned and fled.

"Qu'est ce qu'il a donc, ce Litrebili?" exclaimed one or two students (for they had turned his English nick-name into French).

"Perhaps he's forgotten something," said another. "Perhaps he's forgotten to brush his teeth and part his hair!"

"Perhaps he's forgotten to say his prayers! said Barizel.

"He'll come back, I hope!" exclaimed the master.

And the incident gave rise to no further comment.

But Trilby was much disquieted, and fell to wondering what on earth was the matter.

At first she wondered in French: French of the Quartier Latin. She had not seen Little Billee for a week and wondered if he were ill.

(Continued on page 150.)

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She had looked forward so much to his painting her—painting her beautifully—and hoped he would soon come back and lose no time.

Then she began to wonder in English—nice, clean English of the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts—her father's English—and suddenly a quick thought pierced her through and through and made the flesh tingle on her insteps and the backs of her hands, and bathed her brow and temples with sweat.

She had good eyes, and Little Billee had a singularly expressive face.

Could it possibly be that he was *shocked* at seeing her sitting there?

She knew that he was peculiar in many ways. She remembered that neither he nor Taffy nor the Laird had ever asked her to sit for the figure, though she would have been only too delighted to do so for them. She also remembered how Little Billee had always been silent whenever she alluded to her posing for the "altogether," as she called it, and had sometimes looked pained and always very grave.

She turned alternately pale and red, pale and red all over, again and again, as the thought grew up in her—and soon the growing thought became a torment.

This new-born feeling of shame was unendurable—its birth a travail that racked and rent every fibre of her moral being, and she suffered agonies beyond anything she had ever felt in her life.

"What is the matter with you, my child? Are you ill?" asked Carrel, who, like everyone else, was very fond of her and to whom she had sat as a child ("L'Enfance de Psyché," now in the Luxembourg Gallery, was painted from her).

She shook her head, and the work went on.

Presently she dropped her pitcher, that broke into bits; and putting her two hands to her face, she burst into tears and sobs—and there, to the amazement of everybody, she stood crying like a big baby—*La source aux larmes?*

"What *is* the matter, my poor dear child?" said Carrel, jumping up and helping her off the throne.

"Oh, I don't know—I don't know—I'm ill—very ill—let me go home!"

And with kind solicitude and despatch they helped her on with her clothes and Carrel sent for a cab and took her home.

And on the way she dropped her head on his shoulder and wept, and told him all about it as well as she could, and Monsieur Carrel had tears in his eyes too, and wished to Heaven he had never induced her to sit for the figure, either then or at any other time. And pondering deeply and sorrowfully on such terrible responsibility (he had grown-up daughters of his own), he went back to the studio, and in an hour's time they got another model and another pitcher and went to work again. So the pitcher went to the well once more.

And Trilby, as she lay disconsolate on her bed all that day and all the next, and all the next again, thought of her past life with agonies of shame and remorse that made the pain in her eyes seem as a light and welcome relief. For it came, and tortured worse and lasted longer than it had ever done before. But she soon found, to her miserable bewilderment, that mind-aches are the worst of all.

Then she decided that she must write to one of the *trois* Angliches, and chose the Laird.

She was more familiar with him than with the other two; it was impossible not to be familiar with the Laird if he liked one, as he was so easy-going and demonstrative, for all that he was such a canny Scot! Then she had nursed him through his illness; she had often hugged and kissed him before the whole studio full of people—and even when alone with him it had always seemed quite natural for her to do so. It was like a child caressing a favourite young uncle or elder brother. And though the good Laird was the least susceptible of mortals, he would often find these innocent blandishments a somewhat trying ordeal! She had never taken such a liberty with Taffy; and as for Little Billee, she would sooner have died!

So she wrote to the Laird. I give her letter without the spelling, which was often faulty, although her nightly readings had much improved it:

"My Dear Friend,—I am very unhappy. I was sitting at Carrel's, in the Rue des Potirons, and Little Billee came in, and was so shocked and disgusted that he ran away and never came back.

"I saw it all in his face.

"I sat there because M. Carrel asked me to. He has always been very kind to me—M. Carrel—ever since I was a child; and I would do anything to please him, but never *that* again.

"He was there too.

"I never thought anything about sitting before. I sat first as a child to M. Carrel. Mamma made me, and made me promise not to tell papa, and so I didn't. It soon seemed as natural to sit for people as to run errands for them, or wash and mend their clothes. Papa wouldn't have liked my doing that either, though we wanted the money badly. And so he never knew.

"I have sat for the 'altogether' to several other people besides—M. Gérôme, Durien, the two Hennequins and Émile Baratier; and for the head and hands to lots of people, and for the feet only to Charles Faure, André Besson, Mathieu Dumoulin, and Collinet. Nobody else.

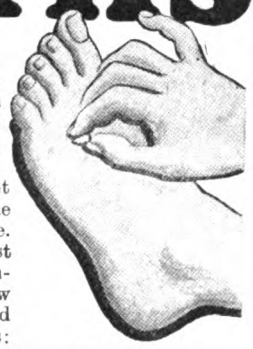
"It seemed as natural for me to sit as for a man. Now I see the awful difference.

"And I have done dreadful things besides, as you must know—as all the Quartier knows. Baratier and Besson; but not Durien, though people think so. Nobody else, I swear—except

(*Continued on page 152*)

corns

conquered



This sufferer from corns had tried various remedies without effect. At last he used Radox, simply a tablespoonful in a footbath. Already one 1s. 6d. packet has given him relief that he had never known before. Why? Because the worst corn can be removed, painful root and all, after a few Radox footbaths. Try it, and see! The letter is as follows:

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old Monsieur Penque at the beginning, who was mamma's friend.

"It makes me almost die of shame and misery to think of it; for that's not like sitting. I knew how wrong it was all along—and there's no excuse for me, none. Though lots of people do as bad, and nobody in the Quartier seems to think any the worse of them.

"If you and Taffy and Little Billee cut me, I really think I shall go mad and die. Without your friendship I shouldn't care to live a bit. Dear Sandy, I love your little finger better than any man or woman I ever met; and Taffy's and Little Billee's little fingers, too.

"What shall I do? I daren't go out for fear of meeting one of you. Will you come and see me?

"I am never going to sit again, not even for the face and hands. I am going back to be a *blanchisseuse de fin* with my old friend Angèle Boisse, who is getting on very well indeed, in the Rue des Cloîtres Ste. Pétronille.

"You *will* come and see me, won't you? I shall be in all day till you do. Or else I will meet you somewhere, if you will tell me where and when; or else I will go and see you in the studio if you are sure to be alone. Please don't keep me waiting long for an answer.

"You don't know what I'm suffering.

"Your ever loving, faithful friend,

"TRILBY O'FERRALL."

She sent this letter by hand, and the Laird came in less than ten minutes after she had sent it; and she hugged and kissed and cried over him so that he was almost ready to cry himself; but he burst out laughing instead—which was better and more in his line and very much more comforting—and talked to her so nicely and kindly and naturally that by the time he left her humble attic in the Rue des Pousse-Cailloux her very aspect, which had quite shocked him when he first saw her, had almost become what it usually was.

The little room under the leads, with its sloping roof and mansard window, was as scrupulously neat and clean as if its tenant had been a holy sister who taught the noble daughters of France at some Convent of the Sacred Heart. There were nasturtiums and mignonette on the outer window-sill and convolvulus was trained to climb round the window.

As she sat by his side on the narrow white bed, clasping and stroking his painty, turpentiny hand and kissing it every five minutes, he talked to her like a father—as he told Taffy afterwards—and scolded her for having been so silly as not to send for him directly or come to the studio. He said how glad he was, how glad they would all be, that she was going to give up sitting for the figure—not, of course, that there was any real harm in it, but it was better not—and especially how happy it would make them to feel she intended to live straight for the future. Little Billee was to remain at Barbizon for a little while, but she must promise to come and dine with Taffy and himself that very day and cook the dinner; and when he went back to his picture, "Les Noces du Toréador"—saying to her as he left, "à ce soir donc, mille sacrés tonnerres de nong de Dew!"—he left the happiest woman in the whole Latin Quarter behind him: she had confessed and been forgiven.

And with shame and repentance and confession and forgiveness had come a strange new feeling—that of a dawning self-respect.

Hitherto, for Trilby, self-respect had meant little more than the mere cleanliness of her body, in which she had always revelled; alas! it was one of the conditions of her humble calling. It now meant another kind of cleanliness, and she would luxuriate in it for evermore; and the dreadful past—never to be forgotten by her—should be so lived down as in time, perhaps, to be forgotten by others.

The dinner that evening was a memorable one for Trilby. After she had washed up the knives and forks and plates and dishes, and put them by, she sat and sewed. She wouldn't even smoke her cigarette, it reminded her so of things and scenes she now hated. No more cigarettes for Trilby O'Ferrall.

They all talked of Little Billee. She heard about the way he had been brought up, about his mother and sister, the people he had always lived among. She also heard (and her heart alternately rose and sank as she listened) what his future was likely to be, and how rare his genius was, and how great—if his friends were to be trusted. Fame and fortune would soon be his—such fame and fortune as fall to the lot of very few—unless anything should happen to spoil his promise and mar his prospects in life and ruin a splendid career; and the rising of the heart was all for him, the sinking for herself. How could she ever hope to be even the friend of such a man? Might she ever hope to be his servant—his faithful, humble servant?

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy.")

The ARGOSY
The WORLD'S BEST STORIES

Vol. II.—No. 15. AUGUST, 1927

The Stranger Woman

A gallant little gentleman—and a big test

By G. B. STERN

AFTER Hal Burnham had banged himself with his usual vigour out of the house, Dickie sat quite inconsolably staring in front of him at a favourite picture on his wall; a dim, sombre effect of quays and masts and intent hurrying men; his neat little brows were pulled down in a worried frown, his childish mouth was puckered.

Was it accurate and just, what Hal had said?

Or, simpler, was it true?

"What you damn well need, Dickie, old son, is life in the raw. You're living in a lady's work-box here."

It was a bludgeoning return for the courteous attention with which Dickie had that evening listened to his friend's experiences of travel, for Hal was not even a good raconteur; he started an anecdote by its point, and roughly slapped in the scenery afterwards; he had likewise the habit of disconnecting his impressions from any sequence of time; also he exaggerated, and forgot names and dates; and even occasionally lapsed into odd silence, just when Dickie was offering himself receptively for a climax.

And then the inevitable: "Well, and what have you been doing, meanwhile?"

Dickie was not in the least at a loss; he had refurnished his rooms, to begin with; and that involved a diligent search in antique shops and at sale rooms, and one or two trips across country in order not to miss a real gem. And he had to be ready for comfortable habitation before the arrival of M. and Mlle. St. Andre for their annual stay with him—a delightful old pair, brother and sister, with peppery manners and hypercritical appreciation of a good cuisine—but so poor, so really painfully poor, that, as Dickie delicately put it: "I could not help knowing that it might make a difference to them if I postponed their visit, of less trivial annoyance, but more vital in quality, than with other of my friends with whom I should, therefore, have hurried my preparations rather less—this is in confidence, of course, my dear Hal!" He had set himself to complete his collection of Watts's *Literary Souvenirs*—"I have the whole eleven volumes now——" And he had been a guest at two charming house-parties in the country; and at one of them he had been given the full responsibility of rehearsing a comic opera in the late eighteenth century style. "Amateurs, of course. But I was so bent on realising the flavour of the period, that I'm indeed afraid that I did not draw a clear line between the deliciously robust and the obnoxiously coarse——"

"Coarse—*you!*" Hal guffawed. And then—out came the accusation that was so disturbing little Dickie.

Life in the raw! Why did that phrase make him want to clear his throat? Raw—yes, that was the association—when you opened your mouth and the fog swirled in.

Newsboys scampering along a foggy street that was neither elegant nor squalid, but just a street of mixed shops and mixed traffic and barrows lit up with a row of flapping lights, and men and women with faces that showed they worked hard to earn a little less than they needed . . . Public-houses . . . Butchers' shops with great slabs of red meat . . . Yes, and a queue outside the picture palace—and a station; people bought the evening paper as they hurried in and out of the station: " 'Ere you are, sir "; and on the sheets were headlines that blared out all the most sordid crimes of the past twenty-four hours, ignored during a sober morning of politics and commerce, but dragging into the bold view for the people's more leisured reading.

Newsboys in a foggy street on a Saturday night—this was Dickie's first instinct to define " life in the raw." . . . Then he discovered that this was only the archway, and that the crimes themselves were life in the raw—and the criminals.

But one must get nearer by slow degrees. If at all.

Hal had said that he was living in a lady's work-basket.

Dickie was sensitive, and not at all stupid. His penetration was quite aware that Burnham's remark was not applied to the harmonising shades of the walls between which he dwelt, nor to the soft, mellow pattern of his silky Persian rugs, nor to his collections—heavens, *how* he collected! —of glowing Sèvres china, of Second Empire miniatures, of quaint old musical instruments with names that in themselves were a tender tinkle of song, and of the shoes that had been worn by queens.

All these things were merely accessories; his soul making neat, tiny gestures, shrugging its shoulders, pointing a toe.

What Hal meant was that Dickie dared not live dangerously.

" What am I to do? "

He raised wistful, light-brown eyes to the picture which was the one incongruous touch to the dainty perfection of his octagonal sitting-room. He had bought it at a rummage sale; it was unsigned; and the canvas, overcrowded with figures, had grown sombre and blurred; yet, queerly, Dickie liked the suggestion of powerful, half-naked men; the foreign quay-side street, with a slatternly woman silent against a doorway, and the clumsy ship straining to swing out to a menacing sea beyond.

All these things that he would never do; strip and carry bales on his back; linger in strange doorways, and love hotly an animal woman who was unaccomplished and without grace and breeding; and then embark on an evil-smelling hulk that would have no human sympathy with his human ills.

He had done a little yachting, of course; with the Ansteys the year before last.

His lips bent to a small ironical smile as he reflected on the difference between " a little yachting," and the sinister fascination of that ugly, uninspired painting . . .

Slowly he got up and went out; that is to say, he very precisely selected the hat, gloves, coat, and silk muffler suitable to wear, and as precisely put them on. Then he blew up the fire with an old-fashioned pair of worked brass bellows; turned out the lamp; told Mrs. Derrick—who would have died in his service every day from eight to eight o'clock, but would not crook a finger for him a minute before she entered the house nor five seconds after she left it—that he was going for a walk and that he would certainly be back at a quarter to seven, but probably before; and then went out.

For this was the natural way for Dickie Maybury to behave.

At twenty to seven he returned, with a sheaf of newspapers—raucous, badly-printed papers with smudged lines and a sort of speckled film over the illustrations, and startlingly intimate headlines to every item of news.

Dickie was trying to get into touch with " life in the raw."

At first he was merely bewildered. He had read his daily newspaper, of course—though not with the stolid regularity with which the average man does so. And besides, it was pre-eminently a journal of dignity and good form, with an art column, and a curio column, and a literary page, and a chess problem, and rather a delicately witty causerie by " Rahere "; it is to be feared that Dickie absorbed himself in these items first, and altogether left out most of the topical and sensational news.

Now, however, he read it. And out of it, the horror of the underworld swayed up at him. A twilit world, where cisterns dripped, and where homely, familiar things like gas-brackets and braces and coal-shovels were turned to dreadful weapons

of death. The coroner and the broker's man and the undertaker sidled in and out of this world, dispassionately playing their frequent parts . . . Stunted boys and girls died for love, like Romeo and Juliet, leaving behind them badly punctuated cries of passion and despair that made Dickie wince as he read them.

Pale, but fascinated, Dickie turned over a page, and came to the great sensation of the moment. " Is Ruth Oliver Guilty ? " " The Dramatic Deve.opments." " I wish You were Dead, Lucas ! "

The account of the first day of the trial, filled the entire page and dribbled excitedly over on to the next. There was a photograph of Ruth Oliver, accused of murdering her husband. You could see that she had gay eyes in a small oval face, and a child's wistful mouth. This must have been taken while she was very happy.

¶

DICKIE had never read through a murder trial before. But he did so now, every line of it . . . and the next day, and the next. Until the woman who had pleaded " Not Guilty " was acquitted. And then he wrote to her, and asked her to marry him.

And who would dare say to him now, that he had feared to meet life in the raw ?

He did not know, of course, that his offer was one among fifty ; did not know that the curious state of mind he was in, between trance and hysteria, was a very common one to the public after a trial in which the elements are dramatic or the central figure in any way picturesque. He did not even know how Ruth Oliver was being noisily besieged by pressmen and editors anxious for her biography ; by music-hall and theatrical managers willing to star her ; by old friends curiously proud of association with her notoriety ; by religious fanatics with their proofs of a strictly localized deity—" whose Hand has clearly been outstretched to save you ! " by unhealthy flappers who had believed in her all along (autograph, please).

But not knowing, yet his letter, chivalrous, without ardour, promised her a cool, quiet retreat from the plague of insects which was buzzing and stinging in the hot air all about her. . . " My house is in a little square with trees all around it ; it is shady, and you cannot hear the traffic. I wonder if you are interested in old china and Japanese water-colours . . . . ? " Finally : " I shall be very proud and happy if you can trust me to understand how deeply you must be longing for sanctuary after the sorrowful time you have been through . . . ."

" Sanctuary." She saw it open for her like a cloistered aisle between old pillars. He offered her, not the emotional variations, intolerable to her weariness just then, of a new devotion ; but green shaded rooms, and the beauty of old things, and a little old-fashioned gentleman's courtesy . . . So, ignoring the fifty other offers of marriage which had assailed her, she wrote to Dickie Maybury, and asked him to come and see her.

He went, still in a strangely exultant mood, in which his will acted as easily and yet as fantastically as though it were on a slippery surface. And if he had met Hal Burnham, on his way back from his visit to Ruth Oliver, he would undoubtedly have swaggered a little. Nevertheless, he was thinking of Ruth, too, as well as his own dare-devilry in thus seizing reality with both hands. Ruth's face, much older and more tormented than it had been in the photograph, had still that elusive quality which had from the beginning, and through all the period of her trial, haunted him. It outraged his refinement that any woman with the high looks and the breeding of his own class, should have been for any space of time the property of a coarse public. As *his* wife, the insult should be tenderly rectified. . . . " The poor child ! the poor sweet child ! " He felt almost godlike, with this new power upon him of acting on impulse.

As for the peril of death which for a short while had threatened her, that was a fact too stark and hideous for contemplation ; even for Dickie's altered appetite for primitive adventure. . . . .

They did not leave town, after their quiet matter-of-fact wedding at the registrar's. A journey, in Dickie's eyes, would have seemed too blatant an interruption to his everyday existence, as though he were tactlessly emphasizing to his wife the necessity of a break and a complete change ; she might even think—and again " poor child ! " that events should have rubbed into such super-sensitiveness—that he was slightly ashamed of his act, and was therefore hustling her and himself out of sight. So they went

straight home. And Mrs Derrick said: "Indeed, sir," when informed that her new mistress was the Ruth Oliver who had recently been acquitted of the charge of murdering her husband; she neither proffered a motherly bosom to Ruth, nor did she tender a haughty resignation from Mr. Maybury's service; but she said she hoped it wouldn't be expected of her, under the new circumstances, to arrive earlier, nor to leave later, because she couldn't do it. As for Dickie's friends, most of them were of the country-house variety whom he visited once a year; next autumn would show whether Ruth would be included in those week and week-end invitations. Meanwhile, those few dwelling in London, marvelled in a detached sort of way at Dickie's feat, liked Ruth, and pronounced it a shame that she should have been accused. Hal Burnham, the indirect promoter of the match, had returned to China.

Nobody was unkind; no word jarred; life was padded in dim brocade—Ruth drew a long breath, and was at peace. She was perfectly happy, watching Dickie. And Dickie was at play again, enjoying his collection and his *objets d'art*, and even his daily habits, with the added appreciation of a gambler who had staked, but miraculously not lost them. Because, after all, anything might have resulted from his tempestuous decision at all costs to get into contact with naked actuality; all that *had* resulted, was the presence in his house of a slim, grave woman, who dressed her hair like a very skilful and not at all unconscious madonna; whose taste was as fastidious as his own, and whose radiantly human smile had survived in vivid contrast to something quenched from her voice and shadowed in her eyes. A woman, who with a "May I?" of half-laughing reverence, discovered that she could slip on to her exquisite feet one pair after another from his collection of the shoes of dead queens—"It sounds like a ballade—Austin Dobson, I think, except that they're not all powder-and-patch queens."

For she had an excellent feel of period—the texture of it, the fine shades of language, the outlook; Dickie hated people who had a blunt sense of period, and in a jumbled fashion referred to old Venetian lace, and the Early Spanish School, and Louise de la Valliere, and a play by Wycherley, indiscriminately as "historical."

Yes, Dickie had certainly been lucky, and like a wise man, he did not strain his star to another effort. The big thing—well, he had squared up to it—and, truth to say, he had been fearfully shaky and uncertain about his capacity to do so when Hal had first roused his pride in the matter. Now the little things again, the little beautiful things—he had earned them.

Anyway, he could not have a newspaper in the house nowadays, for Ruth's sake; he owed it to Ruth to shut out for ever those cries of horror and fear and violence from the battering underworld.

"What I love about the way we live, Dickie, is that the just-rightness of it all flows on evenly the whole time; one can be certain of it. Most people get it set aside for them in stray lumps—picture galleries and churches and a holiday on the Continent. All the rest of their time is just wrongness."

Dick wondered how much of her existence with Lucas Oliver had been "just wrongness"—or, indeed, "all wrongness." But he never disturbed her surface of creamy serenity by referring to the husband who had been murdered by "some person or persons unknown."

He and Ruth were the most harmonious of comrades, but never, so far, confidential. Perhaps Dickie overdid tact and non-intrusiveness; or perhaps Ruth, in her very passion of gratitude to him, was yet checked for ever, from passionate expression, by the memory that her innermost love and her innermost hate, wrung into words, had once, and not so long ago, been read aloud and commented upon in half the homes of England.

¶

ONE evening, sitting together in front of the fire, they drifted into talk of their separate childhoods.

"There was a garden in mine," said Ruth.

"And in mine—a Casino garden!" His eyes twinkled. "Palm trees like giant pineapples, and flowerbeds in a pattern, and a fountain——"

"Oh, you poor little Continental kiddie!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "The ways of the Lord are thoughtful and orderly. Why should He have wasted a heavenly wilderness of gnarled old apple-trees on a small boy who hated climbing?"

"You can't have hated climbing—if you

hang that on your wall." She nodded towards the quayside picture. "Surely you must have played 'pirates and South Seas' with your brothers?"

"I had none. A sister, that's all—who carried a sunshade."

"I had no sisters; but there was a girl next door—and her brother"

"I note in jealous anguish of spirit," remarked Dickie, "that you do not simply say 'a girl and boy next door'."

Ruth's mischievous laugh confirmed his accusation. "The wall was not very high—I kicked a foothold into it half-way up, and Tommy gave me a pull from the top."

"Tommy was ungallant enough to leave climbing the wall to you?"

"There were cherries in his garden—sweet black cherries. And only crab-apples in ours."

"He might have filled his pockets with cherries, and then climbed. No—I reject Tommy, he was unworthy of you. I may have been a horrid little Casino brat, I may even have worn a white satin sailor-suit with trousers down to my ankles——"

"Oh!" Ruth winced.

"I may have danced too well, and I understood too early the art of complimenting ladies whose hats were too big and whose eyes were too bright . . . But once, after Maria Annunciata's nose had bled over this same sailor-suit, I said it was my own nose, because I knew how bitterly she was ashamed of her one bourgeois lapse."

"Tommy would have disowned her, instead of owning the nose. Oh, I grant you the nobler nature . . . but it breaks my heart that you didn't have the wild English garden and the cherries and the grubby old dark-grey jersey."

"If we have a kiddie——" Dickie began softly, his mouth puckered to its special elvish little smile. Then he met her eyes lapping him round with such velvet tenderness that Dickie suddenly knew he was loved, knew that impulsively she was going to tell him so; and, breathlessly happier than he had ever been before, waited for it.

"I *did* kill my husband. They acquitted me, but I was guilty. It was an accident. I was so afraid. They would never have believed it could be an accident. But I had to, in self-defence."

And now she had told him that she loved him.

Only Dickie was too numb to recognise the form her confession of love had taken: Love, as always, was clamouring to be clearly seen—naked, if need be, blood-guilty, if need be, but *seen* . . . . and then swept up, sin and all, by another love big enough to accept this truth, also, as essentially part of her.

. . . Ruth waited several seconds for Dickie to speak. Then she got up, and strolled over to the picture, and said, examining intently, as though for the first time, the woman in the doorway: "I'm not sorry, Dickie. That is to say, I'm sorry, of course, if I've shattered an illusion of yours, but—I can't be melodramatic, you know, not even to the extent of using the word 'murderess' on myself. If I hadn't killed Lucas——"

"He would have killed you?" So he was able to utter natural and coherent sounds! Dickie was surprised.

"Yes——" But Ruth found that, after all, she could not tell Dickie much about Lucas. Lucas had not been a pleasant gentleman to live with—and there were things that Dickie was too fine himself, and too innocent, to realise. The only comprehension in this thoroughly well-groomed atmosphere of soft carpets and dim silken panels and miniatures and rare frail china, might have come from the woman in the doorway of that incongruous picture . . . a woman sullenly patient, brutalised, but—yes, her man would have quite easily been another Lucas.

For that which Dickie had always thought of as mysterious, elusive, was, to Ruth, only sorrowful wisdom.

"Come here, Ruth."

She dragged her eyes away from the picture; crossed the room; broke down completely, her head on his knees, her shuddering body crouched closely to the floor: "When you've—been frightened—and have to live with it—and it doesn't even stop at night—for weeks and months and years—one's nerves aren't quite reliable . . . They've no right to call *that* murder, have they? have they, Dickie? When you've been afraid for a long time—and there's no one you can tell about it except the person who *makes* the fear . . ."

But Dickie was all she had perilously dared to hope he would be at this crisis. He soothed her and healed her by his loyalty; promised, without her extorting it, that he would never tell a soul what she had just told him; pixie-shy, yet he spoke of his

personal need of her—and more than anything else she had desired to hear this. He mentioned some trivial intimate plans for their unbroken, unchanged future together, so as to reassure her of its continuance. He even made her laugh.

In fact, for a last appearance in the rôle of a gallant little gentleman, Dickie did not do so badly.

¶

HE woke in the night from a bad dream . . . with terror clinging thickly about his senses. But it did not slowly dissolve and release him, as nightmare is wont to do. It remained, so he lay still as a man in his winding-sheet, afraid to move—remembering——

"I *did* kill my husband."

Yes—that was it. In the room with him, was a strange woman who had killed her husband.

Not Ruth—but a strange woman. How had she got into the room with him?

She had killed her husband. And now, *he* was her husband.

He lay motionless, but his imagination began to crawl . . . What might happen to a man shut up alone in a house with a woman who—murdered?

His imagination began to race—and he lost control of it.

Murder! . . . With dry, sandy throat, and a kicking heart, Dickie had to pay for his audacity in imagining he was big enough to claim life in the raw.

"Not big enough! Not big enough!"—the goblins of the underworld croaked at him in triumphant chorus. . . . They capered . . . they snapped their fingers at him . . . they spun him down to where fear was . . . he had delivered himself to them, by not being big enough.

"Mrs. Bigger had a baby—which was bigger, Mrs. Bigger or the baby?"

The silly conundrum sprang at him from goodness knows what void—and over and over again he repeated it to himself, trying to remember the answer, trying to forget fear. . . .

"Mrs. Bigger had a baby——"

He dared not fall asleep . . . with the woman who had killed her husband, alone in the room with him . . . alone in the house with him.

A stir from the other bed, and one arm flung out in sleep. Dickie's knees jerked violently—his skin went cold and sticky with sweat: "You fool—it's only Ruth!"

But she *did* it—she did it once. There are people who can't kill; and a few, just a very few, who can. And because they can, they are different, and have to be shut away from the herd.

But—but this woman! They've made a ghastly mistake—they've let her go free—and I can't tell anyone . . . nobody knows, except me and Ruth . . . Ah, yes—a quivering sigh of relief here—Ruth knows, too—Ruth, my wife—Ruth means pity. . . .

There is no Ruth . . . there never was . . . Quite alone except for a strange, strange woman—the kind that gets shut away and kept by herself. . . .

To this bondage had Dickie's nerves delivered him. The custom of punctilious courtesy, so deeply ingrained as to mean in his case the impossibility of wounding another, decreed that some pretence must be kept up before Ruth. But, with one shock, she divined the next morning the significant change in him, and bowed her head to it. What could she do? She loved him, but she had overrated the capacity of his spirit. There had never been any courage, only kindness and sweetness and chivalry—all no good to him, now that courage was wanted. She had made a mistake in telling him the truth.

Suffering—she thought she had suffered fiercely with Lucas; she thought she had suffered while she was being ignominiously tried for her life; but what was either of these phases, compared with the helpless bitterness of seeing Dickie, whom she loved, afraid of her?

Even her periodic fits of wild arrogant passion, which usually, when they surged past restraint, wrecked and altered whatever situation was hemming her in, and left gaps for a passage through to something else—even these had now to be curbed. Useful in hate, they were impotent in love. So Ruth recognised, in her new humility. But when one day, seized with panic at having spoken irritably to her, Dick hastily tried to propitiate her, to ingratiate himself so that she might spare him, might let him live a little longer, then Ruth felt she must cry aloud under the strain of this subtle torture. Why, he was her lover, her man, her child. . . . In thought, her arm shaped itself into a crook for his head to lie there; her fingers smoothed out the drawn perplexity of his brows; her kisses were cool as snow on his hot, twitching little mouth;

her voice, hushed to a lullaby croon, promised him that nobody should hurt him, nobody, while she was there to heal and protect——

Sleep, baby, sleep
The hills are white with sheep——

Over and over again she lulled herself with the old rhyme, for comfort's sake. But Dickie she could not comfort, since, irony of ironies, she was the cause of his pitiful breakdown. Why, if she spoke, he started; if she moved towards him, he shrank. Yet still Ruth dreamt that if he would only let her touch him, she could bring him reassurance. But meanwhile his appetite was meagre; the rare half-hours he slept were broken with evil dreams, from which he awoke whimpering. He did not care any more about the little beautiful things he had collected and grouped about him, but sat for hours listless and blank; his appearance a grotesque parody of the trim and dapper Dickie Maybury of the past; what could it matter how he looked, with death slicing so close to him?

"The master seems poorly of late, don't he, ma'am? His digestion ain't strong. P'r'haps something 'as disagreed with him." Thus Mrs. Derrick, taking her part in the drama, as the simple character who makes speeches of more significant portent than she is aware of.

Something had, indeed, disagreed with Dickie. In the slang phrase: "he had bitten off more than he could chew."

And the goblins were hunting him; whispering how she would creep up to him stealthily from behind, this woman who killed . . . and he put her arms round him, and put her fingers to his throat—that was one way!

Other ways there were, of course. He must learn them all, so as to be watchful and prepared. Self-defence . . . accident. Of course, they always said it was accident. He knew that now, for the evening crime-sheets began to appear in the flat again, and Dickie studied them, in place of the *villanelles*, the graceful essays, the *belles-lettres* of his former choice. Ruth saw him, with his delicate shaking hands clutching the newspapers, his mild eyes bright with sordid fascination. He was ill, certainly; and brain-sick and oppressed; and she yearned for his illness to show itself as a tangible, serious matter; a matter of bed and doctor and complete prostration, and unwearied effort on the part of his nurse. "My darling—my darling . . . He did everything for me, when I most needed it. And now I can do nothing. It isn't fair!"

She stood by one of the open windows of the pretty Watteau sitting-room. The lamps had just sprung to fiery stars in the blue glamorous twilight of the square; the fragrance of wet lilac blew up to her, and a blackbird among the bushes began to sing like mad. . . . The fist which was cruelly squeezing Ruth's spirit, seemed slowly to unclench. . . and suddenly it struck her that things might be made worth while again for her and Dickie. After all, how insane it was for him to be huddling miserably, as she knew he would be, in the arm-chair of his study, gazing with forlorn eyes at the squalid columns, which it had grown too dark for him to decipher. She had a vision of what this very evening might yet hold of recovered magic, if only she had the courage to carry out her simple cure of his head drawn on her left breast, just where her heart was beating:

"Dickie, it's *all right*, you know—it's only Ruth! You've been sitting with your bogies, and all the time the white lilac has been coming out——"

A faint smile lay at last on Ruth's mouth, and in the curve of her tired eyelids. She went softly into the study.

Dickie sprang to his feet with a yell of terror, as her hands came round his neck from behind. He clutched at the revolver in his pocket and fired, at random, backwards. . . .

In the wall behind them was the round dark mark of a merciful bullet. And——

"Dickie—oh, Dickie—when you've been frightened—and have to live with it—and it doesn't even stop at nights—do you understand, now, how it happens? They've no right to call *that* murder, have they, Dickie?"

And now, indeed, understanding that the awful act of killing could be, in a rare once or twice, a human accident for the frightened little human to commit—understanding, Dickie was shocked back to sanity.

"Dear, dear Ruth——" Why, this stranger woman was no stranger, after all, but Ruth, his own sweet wife. Dickie was tired, and he knew he need not explain things to her. He laid his head down on her left breast, just where the heart was beating.

Travel and Travellers

TRAVEL in the younger sort is a part of education; in the older a part of experience.
BACON.

A MAN who leaves home to mend himself and others is a philosopher; but he who goes from country to country, guided by the blind impulse of curiosity, is a vagabond.
GOLDSMITH.

A PRUDENT traveller never disparages his own country. GOLDONI.

TRAVEL is the frivolous part of serious lives, and the serious part of frivolous ones.
MME. SWETCHINE.

A GOOD road and a wise traveller are two different things. PROVERB.

THERE is a good deal of difference between travelling to see countries and travelling to see peoples. ROUSSEAU.

THE use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are. JOHNSON.

HOW much a dunce that has been sent to roam
Excels a dunce that has been left at home! COWPER.

HE who goes alone may start to-day; but he who travels with another must wait till that other is ready. THOREAU.

IF you want to see how selfish people are, and how skin-deep fashionable politeness is, take a voyage. G. B. SHAW.

HE travels safe and not unpleasantly who is guarded by poverty and guided by love.
SIR P. SIDNEY.

IF an ass goes a-travelling, he'll not come home a horse. PROVERB.

SOME minds improve by travel, others rather
Resemble copper wire or brass,
Which gets the narrower by going further. HOOD.

A MAN is the happier for life for having once made an agreeable tour. SYDNEY SMITH.

IT rests upon the verdict of all true-hearted and good men that there is not a nook or corner of the world, in which something cannot be found which will touch or comfort men's minds with a sense of the divine presence. J. KEBLE.

TRAVEL teaches toleration. DISRAELI.

THERE is no new thing under the sun. Perhaps that sun himself, which now beams so impressively, is only an old warmed-up jest. HEINE.

TO pass the seas some think a toil;
Some think it strange abroad to roam.
Some think it grief to leave the soil,
Their parents, kinsfolk and their home.
Think so who list, I like it not;
I must abroad to try my lot. BARNABE GOOGE.

NOTHING is more natural than that we should grow giddy at a great sight which comes unexpectedly before us, to make us feel at once our littleness and our greatness. But there is not in the world any truer enjoyment than at the moment when we are thus made giddy for the first time. GOETHE.

The Song of Life

Of a master of music and his "magnum opus"

By W. J. LOCKE

NON cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum. It is not everybody's good fortune to go to Corinth. It is also not everybody's good fortune to go to Peckham—still less to live there. But if you were one of the favoured few, and were wont to haunt the Peckham Road and High Street, the bent figure of Angelo Fardetti would be as familiar to you as the vast frontage of the great emporium which, in the drapery world, makes Peckham illustrious among London suburbs. You would have seen him humbly threading his way through the female swarms that clustered at the plate-glass windows—the mere drones of the hive were fooling their frivolous lives away over ledgers in the City—the inquiry of a lost dog in his patient eyes, and an unconscious challenge to Philistia in the wiry bush of white hair that protruded beneath his perky soft felt hat. If he had been short, he might have passed unregarded; but he was very tall—in his heyday he had been six feet two—and very thin. You smile as you recall to mind the black frock coat, somewhat white at the seams, which, tightly buttoned, had the fit of a garment of corrugated iron.

Although he was so tall one never noticed the inconsiderable stretch of trouser below the long skirt. You were inclined to laugh at this queer exotic of the Peckham Road until you looked more keenly at the man himself. Then you saw an old, old face, very swarthy, very lined, very beautiful still in its regularity of feature, maintaining in a little white moustache with waxed ends a pathetic braggadocio of youth; a face in which the sorrows of the world seemed to have their dwelling, but sorrows that had passed through the crucible of a simple soul.

Twice a day it was his habit to walk there; shops and faces a meaningless confusion to his eyes, but his ears alert to the many harmonies of the orchestra of the great thoroughfare. For Angelo Fardetti was a musician. Such had he been born; such had he lived. Those aspects of life which could not be interpreted in terms of music were to him unintelligible. During his seventy years empires had crumbled, kingdoms had arisen, magic conquests been made by man over nature. But none of these convulsive facts had ever stirred Angelo Fardetti's imagination. Even his country he had well-nigh forgotten; it was so many years since he had left it, so much music had passed since then through his being. Yet he had never learned to speak English correctly; and, not having an adequate language (save music) in which to clothe his thoughts, he spoke very little.

Though his figure was so familiar to the inhabitants of Peckham, few knew how and where he lived. As a matter of fact, he lived a few hundred yards away from the busy High Street, in Formosa Terrace, at the house of one Hans Schneider, a musician. He had lodged with the Schneiders for over twenty years—but not always in the roomy splendour of Formosa Terrace. Once Angelo was first violin in an important orchestra, a man of mark, while Hans Schneider fiddled away in the obscurity of a fifth-rate music-hall. Then the famous violinist rented the drawing-room floor of the Schneiders' little house in Clapham. Now things had changed. Hans Schneider was musical director of a theatre, but Angelo could fiddle in public no more; and so it came to pass that Hans Schneider and Noémi, his wife, and Elsa, their daughter (to whom Angelo had stood godfather twenty years ago), rioted in spaciousness, while the old man lodged in tiny rooms at the top of the house, paying an infinitesimal rent and otherwise living on his scanty savings and such few shillings as he could earn by copying out parts and giving lessons to here and there a snub-nosed little girl in a tradesman's back parlour. Often he might have gone

without sufficient nourishment had not Mrs. Schneider seen to it; and whenever an extra good dish appeared at her table, Elsa carried a plateful upstairs with homely compliments.

"You are making of me a spoiled child, Noémi," he would say sometimes, "and I ought not to eat of the food for which Hans works so hard."

And she would reply with a laugh:

"*Mein Gott*, if we did not keep you alive, Signor Fardetti, how should we have our quatuors on Sundays?"

You see, Mrs. Schneider, like the good Hans, had lived all her life in music too—she was a pianist; and Elsa also was a musician—she played the 'cello in a ladies' orchestra. So they had famous Sunday quatuors at Formosa Terrace, in which Fardetti was well content to play second fiddle to Hans's first.

You see, also, that but for these honest souls to whom a musician like Fardetti was a sort of blood-brother, the evening of the old man's days might have been one of tragic sadness. But even their affection and his glad pride in the brilliant success of his old pupil, Geoffrey Chase, could not mitigate the one great sorrow of his life. The violin, yes; he had played it well; he had not aimed at a great soloist's fame; but other dreams had he dreamed with passionate intensity.

He had dreamed of being a great composer, and he had beaten his heart out against the bars that shut him from the great mystery. A waltz or two, a few songs, a catchy march, had been published and performed, and had brought him unprized money and a little hateful repute; but the compositions into which he had poured his soul remained in dusty manuscript, despised and rejected of musical men. For many years the artist's imperious craving to create and hope and will kept him serene. Then, in the prime of his days, a tremendous inspiration shook him. He had a divine message to proclaim to the world, a song of life itself, a revelation. It was life, indestructible, eternal. It was the seed that grew into the tree; the tree that flourished lustily, and then grew bare and stark and perished; the seed, again, of the tree that rose unconquerable into the laughing leaf of spring. It was the kiss of lovers that, when they were dead and gone, lived immortal on the lips of grandchildren. It was the endless roll of the seasons, the majestic, triumphant rhythm of existence. It was a cosmic chant, telling of things as only music could tell of them, and as no musician had ever told of them before.

¶

HE attempted the impossible, you will say. He did. That was the pity of it. He spent the last drop of his heart's blood over his sonata. He wrote it and re-wrote it, wasting years, but never could he imprison within those remorseless ruled lines the elusive sounds that shook his being. An approximation to his dream reached the stage of a completed score. But he knew that it was thin and lifeless. The themes that were to be developed into magic harmonies tinkled into commonplace. The shell of his vast conception was there, but the shell alone. The thing could not live without the unseizable, and that he had not seized. Angelo Fardetti, broken down by toil and misery, fell very sick. Doctors recommended Brighton. Docile as a child, he went to Brighton, and there a pretty lady who admired his playing at the Monday Popular Concerts at St. James's Hall got hold of him and married him. When she ran away, a year later, with a dashing young stockbroker, he took the score of the sonata that was to be the whole interpretation of life from its half-forgotten hiding-place, played it through on the piano, burst into a passion of tears, in the uncontrollable Italian way, sold up his house, and went to lodge with Hans Schneider.

To no son or daughter of man did he ever show a note or play a bar of the sonata. And never again did he write a line of music. Bravely and humbly he faced life, though the tragedy of failure made him prematurely old. And all through the years the sublime message reverberated in his soul and haunted his dreams; and his was the bitter sorrow of knowing that never should that message be delivered for the comforting of the world.

The loss of his position as first violin forced him, at sixty, to take more obscure engagements. That was when he followed the Schneiders to Peckham. And then he met the joy of his old age—his one pupil of genius, Geoffrey Chase, an untrained lad of fourteen, the son of a well-to-do seed merchant in the High Street.

"His father thinks it waste of time,"

said Mrs. Chase, a gentle, mild-eyed woman, when she brought the boy to him, "but Geoffrey is so set on it—and so I've persuaded his father to let him have lessons."

"Do you, too, love music?" he asked.

Her eyes grew moist, and she nodded.

"Poor lady! He should not let you starve. Never mind," he said, patting her shoulder. "Take comfort. I will teach your boy to play for you. He shall feed music to your soul."

And he did. He taught him for three years. He taught him passionately all he knew, for Geoffrey, with music in his blood, had the great gift of the composer. He poured upon the boy all the love of his lonely old heart, and dreamed glorious dreams of his future. The Schneiders, too, regarded Geoffrey as a *wunderkind*, and welcomed him into their circle, and made much of him. And little Elsa fell in love with him, and he, in his boyish way, fell in love with the flaxen-haired maiden who played on a 'cello so much bigger than herself. At last the time came when Angelo said:

"My son, I can teach you no more. You must go to Leipsic."

"My father will never consent," said Geoffrey.

"We will try to arrange that," said Angelo.

So, in their simple ways, Angelo and Mrs. Chase intrigued together until they prevailed upon Mr. Chase to attend one of the Schneiders' Sunday concerts. He came in church-going clothes, and sat with irreconcilable stiffness on a straight-backed chair. His wife sat close by, much agitated. The others played a concerto arranged as a quintette; Geoffrey first violin, Angelo second, Elsa 'cello, Hans bass, and Mrs. Schneider at the piano. It was a piece of exquisite tenderness and beauty.

"Very pretty," said Mr. Chase.

"It's beautiful," cried his wife, with tears in her eyes.

"I said so," remarked Mr. Chase.

"And what do you think of my pupil?" Angelo asked excitedly.

"I think he plays very nicely," Mr. Chase admitted.

"But, dear heavens!" cried Angelo. "It is not his playing! One could pick up fifty better violinists in the street. It is the concerto—the composition."

Mr. Chase rose slowly to his feet. "Do you mean to tell me that Geoffrey made up all that himself?"

"Of course. Didn't you know?"

"Will you play it again?"

Gladly they assented. When it was over he took Angelo out into the passage.

"I'm not one of those narrow-minded people who don't believe in art, Mr. Fardetti," said he. "And Geoff has already shown me that he can't sell seeds for toffee. But if he takes up music, will he be able to earn his living at it?"

"Beyond doubt," replied Angelo, with a wide gesture.

"But a good living? You'll forgive me being personal, Mr. Fardetti, but you yourself——"

"I," said the old man humbly, "am only a poor fiddler—but your son is a great musical genius."

"I'll think over it," said Mr. Chase, and Angelo bowed.

¶

MR. CHASE thought over it, and Geoffrey went to Leipsic, and Angelo Fardetti was once more left desolate. On the day of the lad's departure he and Elsa wept a little in each other's arms, and late that night he once more unearthed the completed score of his sonata, and scanned it through in vain hope of comfort. But as the months passed comfort came. His beloved swan was not a goose, but a wonder among swans. He was a wonder at the Leipsic Conservatoire, and won prize after prize and medal after medal, and every time he came home he bore his blushing honours thicker upon him. And he remained the same frank, simple youth, always filled with gratitude and reverence for his old master, and though on familiar student terms with all conditions of cosmopolitan damsels, never faithless to the little music-loving maiden whom he had left at home.

In the course of time his studies were over, and he returned to England. A professorship at the Royal School of Music very soon rendered him financially independent. He began to create. Here and there a piece of his was played at concerts. He wrote incidental music for solemn productions at great London theatres. Critics discovered him, and wrote much about him in the newspapers. Mr. Chase, the seed

merchant, though professing to his wife a man of the world's indifference to notoriety, used surreptitiously to cut out the notices and carry them about in his fat pocket-book, and whenever he had a new one he would lie in wait for the lean figure of Angelo Fardetti, and hale him into the shop and make him drink Geoffrey's health in sloe gin, which Angelo abhorred, but gulped down in honour of the wonder-child.

One fine October morning Angelo Fardetti missed his walk. He sat instead by his window, and looked unseeingly at the prim row of houses on the opposite side of Formosa Terrace. He had not the heart to go out—and, indeed, he had not the money; for these walks, twice daily, along the High Street and the Peckham Road, took him to and from a queer little Italian restaurant which, with him apparently as its only client, had eked out for years a mysterious and precarious existence. He felt very old—he was seventy-two, very useless, very poor. He had lost his last pupil, a fat, unintelligent girl of thirteen, the daughter of a local chemist, and no one had sent him any copying work for a week. He had nothing to do. He could not even walk to his usual sparrow's meal. It is sad when you are so old that you cannot earn the right to live in a world which wants you no longer.

Looking at unseen bricks through a small window-pane was little consolation. Mechanically he rose and went to a grand piano, his one possession of price, which, with an old horsehair sofa, an oval table covered with a maroon cloth, and a chair or two, congested the tiny room, and, sitting down, began to play one of Stephen Heller's "Nuits Blanches." You see, Angelo Fardetti was an old-fashioned musician. Suddenly a phrase arrested him. He stopped dead, and remained staring out over the polished plane of the piano. For a few moments he was lost in the chain of associated musical ideas. Then suddenly his swarthy, lined face lit up, and he twirled his little white moustache and began to improvise, striking great majestic chords.

Presently he rose, and from a pile of loose music in a corner drew a sheet of ruled paper. He returned to the piano, and began feverishly to pencil down his inspiration. His pulses throbbed. At last he had got the great andante movement of his sonata. For an hour he worked intensely; then came the inevitable check. Nothing more would come. He rose and walked about the room, his head swimming. After a quarter of an hour he played over what he had written, and then, with a groan of despair, fell forward, his arms on the keys, his bushy white head on his arms.

The door opened, and Elsa, comely and shapely, entered the room, carrying a tray with food and drink set out on a white cloth. Seeing him bowed over the piano, she put the tray on the table and advanced.

"Dear godfather," she said gently, her hand on his shoulder.

He raised his head and smiled.

"I did not hear you, my little Elsa."

"You have been composing?"

He sat upright, and tore the pencilled sheets into fragments, which he dropped in a handful on the floor.

"Once, long ago, I had a dream. I lost it. To-day I thought that I had found it. But do you know what I did really find?"

"No, godfather," replied Elsa, stooping, with housewifely tidiness, to pick up the litter.

"That I am a poor old fool," said he.

Elsa threw the paper into the grate and again came up behind him.

"It is better to have lost a dream than never to have had one at all. What was your dream?"

"I thought I could write the 'Song of Life' as I heard it—as I hear it still." He smote his forehead lightly. "But no! God has not considered me worthy to sing it. I bow my head to His—to His"—he sought for the word with thin fingers—"to His decree."

She said, with the indulgent wisdom of youth speaking to age:

"He has given you the power to love and to win love."

The old man swung round on the music-stool and put his arm round her waist and smiled into her young face.

"Geoffrey is a very fortunate fellow."

"Because he's a successful composer?"

He looked at her and shook his head and Elsa, knowing what he meant, blushed very prettily. Then she laughed and broke away.

"Mother has had seventeen partridges sent her as presents this week, and she wants you to help her eat them, and father's offered a bargain in Liebfraumilch, and

won't decide until you tell him what you think of it."

Deftly she set out the meal, and drew a chair to the table. Angelo Fardetti rose.

"That I should love you all," said he simply, "is only human, but that you should so much love me is more than I can understand."

You see, he knew that watchful ears had missed his usual outgoing footsteps, and that watchful hearts had divined the reason. To refuse, to hesitate, would be to reject love. So there was no more to be said. He sat down meekly, and Elsa ministered to his wants. As soon as she saw that he was making headway with the meal, she too sat down.

"Godfather," she said, "I've had splendid news this morning."

"Geoffrey?"

"Of course. What other news could be splendid? His Symphony in E flat is going to be given at the Queen's Hall."

"That is indeed beautiful news," said the old man, laying down knife and fork, "but I did not know that he had written a Symphony in E flat."

"That is why he went and buried himself for months in Cornwall—to finish it," she explained.

"I knew nothing about it. Aie! aie!" he sighed. "It is to you, and no longer to me, that he tells things."

"You silly, jealous old dear!" she laughed. "He *had* to account for deserting me all the summer. But as to what it's all about, I'm as ignorant as you are. I've not heard a note of it. Sometimes Geoff is like that, you know. If he's dead certain sure of himself, he won't have any criticism or opinions while the work's in progress. It's only when he's doubtful that he brings one in. And the doubtful things are never anything like the certain ones. You must have noticed it."

"That is true," said Angelo Fardetti, taking up knife and fork again. "He was like that since he was a boy."

"It is going to be given on Saturday fortnight. He'll conduct himself. They've got a splendid programme to send him off. Lembrich's going to play, and Carli's going to sing—just for his sake. Isn't it gorgeous?"

"It is grand. But what does Geoffrey say about it? Come, come, after all he is not the Sphinx." He drummed his fingers impatiently on the table.

Would you really like to know?"

"I am waiting."

"He says it's going to knock 'em!" she laughed.

"Knock 'em?'

"Those were his words."

'But——"

She interpreted into purer English. Geoffrey was confident that his symphony would achieve a sensational success.

"In the meanwhile," said she, "if you don't finish your partridge you'll break mother's heart."

She poured out a glass of hock, which the old man drank; but he refused the food.

"No, no," he said. "I cannot eat more. I have a lump there—in my throat. I am too excited. I feel that he is marching to his great triumph. My little Geoffrey." He rose, knocking his chair over, and strode about the confined space. "*Sacramento!* But I am a wicked old man. I was sorrowful because I was so dull, so stupid that I could not write a sonata. I blamed the good God. *Mea maxima culpa.* And at once he sends me a partridge in a halo of love, and the news of my dear son's glory——"

Elsa stopped him, her plump hands on the front of his old corrugated frock coat.

"And your glory, too, dear godfather. If it hadn't been for you, where would Geoffrey be? And who realizes it more than Geoffrey? Would you like to see a bit of his letter? Only a little bit—for there's a lot of rubbish in it that I would be ashamed of anybody who thinks well of him to read—but just a little bit."

Her hand was at the broad belt joining blouse and skirt. Angelo, towering above her, smiled with an old man's tenderness at the laughing love in her blue eyes, and at the happiness in her young, comely face. Her features were generous, and her mouth frankly large, but her lips were fresh and her teeth white and even, and to the old fellow she looked all that man could dream of, the virginal mother-to-be of great sons. She fished the letter from her belt, scanned and folded it carefully.

"There! Read."

And Angelo Fardetti read:

"I've learned my theory and technique and God knows what—things that only they could teach me—from professors with world-famous names. But for real

inspiration, for the fount of music itself, I come back all the time to our dear old *maestro*, Angelo Fardetti. I can't for the life of me define what it is, but he opened for me a secret chamber behind whose concealed door all these illustrious chaps have walked unsuspectingly. It seems silly to say it because, beyond a few odds and ends, the dear old man has composed nothing, but I am convinced I owe the *essentials* of everything I do in music to his teaching and influence."

Angelo gave her back the folded letter without a word, and turned and stood again by the window, staring unseeingly at the prim, semi-detached villas opposite. Elsa, having re-hidden her treasure, stole up to him. Feeling her near, he stretched out a hand and laid it on her head.

"God is very wonderful," said he—"very mysterious. Oh, and so good!"

He fumbled, absently and foolishly, with her well-ordered hair, saying nothing more. After a while she freed herself gently and led him back to his partridge.

¶

A DAY or two afterwards Geoffrey came to Peckham, and mounted with Elsa to Fardetti's rooms, where the old man embraced him tenderly, and expressed his joy in the exuberant foreign way. Geoffrey received the welcome with an Englishman's laughing embarrassment. Perhaps the only fault that Angelo Fardetti could find in the beloved pupil was his uncompromising English manner and appearance. His well-set figure and crisp, short fair hair and fair moustache did not sufficiently express him as a great musician. Angelo had to content himself with the lad's eyes—musician's eyes, as he said, very bright, arresting, dark blue, with depths like sapphires, in which lay strange thoughts and human laughter.

"I've only run in, dear old *maestro*, to pass the time of day with you, and to give you a ticket for my Queen's Hall show. You'll come, won't you?"

"He asks if I will come! I would get out of my coffin and walk through the streets!"

"I think you'll be pleased," said Geoffrey. "I've been goodness knows how long over it, and I've put into it all I know. If it doesn't come off, I'll——"

He paused.

"You will commit no rashness," cried the old man in alarm.

"I will. I'll marry Elsa the very next day!"

There was laughing talk, and the three spent a happy little quarter of an hour. But Geoffrey went away without giving either of the others an inkling of the nature of his famous symphony. It was Geoffrey's way.

The fateful afternoon arrived. Angelo Fardetti, sitting in the stalls of the Queen's Hall with Elsa and the Schneiders, looked round the great auditorium, and thrilled with pleasure at seeing it full. London had thronged to hear the first performance of his beloved's symphony. As a matter of fact, London had also come to hear the wonderful orchestra give Tchaikowsky's Fourth Symphony, and to hear Lembrich play the violin and Carli sing, which they did once in a blue moon at a symphony concert. But in the old man's eyes these ineffectual fires paled before Geoffrey's genius.

So great was his suspense and agitation that he could pay but scant attention to the first two items on the programme. It seemed almost like unmeaning music, far away.

During the interval before the Symphony in E flat his thin hand found Elsa's, and held it tight, and she returned the pressure. She, too, was sick with anxiety. The great orchestra, tier upon tier, was a-flutter with the performers scrambling into their places, and with leaves of scores being turned over, and with a myriad moving bows. Then, all having settled into the order of a vast machine, Geoffrey appeared at the conductor's stand. Comforting applause greeted him. Was he not the rising hope of English music? Many others besides those four to whom he was dear, and the mother and father who sat a little way in front of them, felt the same nervous apprehension.

The future of English music was at stake. Would it be yet one more disappointment and disillusion, or would it rank the young English composer with the immortals? Geoffrey bowed smilingly at the audience, turned and with his baton gave the signal to begin.

Although only a few years have passed since that memorable first performance, the modestly named Symphony in E flat

is now famous, and Geoffrey Chase is a great man the wide world over. To every lover of music the symphony is familiar. But only those who were present at the Queen's Hall on that late October afternoon can realize the wild rapture of enthusiasm with which the symphony was greeted. It answered all longings, solved all mysteries. It interpreted, for all who had ears to hear, the fairy dew of love, the burning depths of passion, sorrow and death and the eternal Triumph of Life. Intensely modern and faultless in technique, it was new, unexpected, individual, unrelated to any school.

The scene was one of raging tumult; but there was one human being who did not applaud, and that was the old musician, forgotten of the world, Angelo Fardetti. He had fainted.

All through the piece he had sat, bolt upright, his nerves strung to breaking point, his dark cheeks growing greyer and greyer, and the stare in his eyes growing more and more strange, and the grip on the girl's hand growing more and more vice-like, until she, for sheer agony, had to free herself. And none concerned themselves about him; not even Elsa, for she was enwrapped in the soul of her lover's music. And even between the movements her heart was too full for speech or thought, and when she looked at the old man, she saw him smile wanly and nod his head as one who, like herself, was speechless with emotion. At the end the storm burst. She rose with the shouting, clapping, hand- and handkerchief-waving house, and suddenly, missing him from her side, glanced round and saw him huddled up unconscious in his stall.

The noise and movement were so great that few noticed the long, lean old figure being carried out of the hall by one of the side doors fortunately near. In the vestibule, attended by the good Hans and his wife and Elsa, and a commissionaire, he recovered. When he could speak, he looked round and said:

"I am a silly old fellow. I am sorry I have spoiled your happiness. I think I must be too old for happiness, for this is how it has treated me."

There was much discussion among his friends as to what should be done, but good Mrs. Schneider, once girlishly plump, when Angelo had first known her, now florid and fat and motherly, had her way, and, leaving Hans and Elsa to see the hero of the afternoon, if they could, drove off in a cab to Peckham with the overwrought old man and put him to bed and gave him homely remedies, invalid food and drink, and commanded him to sleep till morning.

But Angelo Fardetti disobeyed her. For Elsa, although she had found him meekly between the sheets when she went up to see him that evening, heard him later, as she was getting to bed—his sitting-room was immediately above her—playing over, on muted strings, various themes of Geoffrey's symphony. At last she went up to his room and put her head in at the door, and saw him, a lank, dilapidated figure in an old, old dressing-gown, fiddle and bow in hand.

"Oh! oh!" she rated. "You are a naughty, naughty old dear. Go to bed at once."

He smiled like a guilty but spoiled child. "I will go," said he.

¶

IN the morning she herself took up his simple breakfast and all the newspapers folded at the page on which the notices of the concert were printed. The Press was unanimous in acclamation of the great genius that had raised English music to the spheres. She sat at the foot of the bed and read to him while he sipped his coffee and munched his roll, and, absorbed in her own tremendous happiness, was content to feel the glow of the old man's sympathy. There was little to be said save exclamatory pæans, so overwhelming was the triumph. Tears streamed down his lined cheeks, and between the tears there shone the light of a strange gladness in his eyes. Presently Elsa left him and went about her household duties. An hour or so afterwards she caught the sound of his piano; again he was recalling bits of the great symphony, and she marvelled at his musical memory. Then about half-past eleven she saw him leave the house and stride away, his head in the air, his bent shoulders curiously erect.

Soon came the clatter of a cab stopping at the front door, and Geoffrey Chase, for whom she had been watching from her window, leaped out upon the pavement. She ran down and admitted him. He caught her in his arms, and they stood clinging in a long embrace.

"It's too wonderful to talk about," she whispered.

"Then don't let us talk about it," he laughed.

"As if we could help it! I can think of nothing else."

"I can—you," said he, and kissed her again.

Now, in spite of the spaciousness of the house in Formosa Terrace, it had only two reception-rooms, as the house-agents grandiloquently term them, and these, dining-room and drawing-room, were respectively occupied by Hans and Mrs. Schneider engaged in their morning lessons. The passage where the young people stood was no fit place for lovers' meetings.

"Let us go up to the *maestro's*. He's out," said Elsa.

They did as they had often done in like circumstances. Indeed, the old man, before now, had given up his sitting-room to them, feigning an unconquerable desire to walk abroad. Were they not his children, dearer to him than anyone else in the world? So it was natural that they should make themselves at home in his tiny den. They sat and talked of the great victory, of the playing of the orchestra, of passages that he might take slower or quicker next time, of the ovation, of the mountain of congratulatory telegrams and letters that blocked up his rooms. They talked of Angelo Fardetti and his deep emotion and his pride. And they talked of the future, of their marriage which was to take place very soon. She suggested postponement.

"I want you to be quite sure. This must make a difference."

"Difference!" he cried indignantly.

She waved him off and sat on the music-stool by the piano.

"I must speak sensibly. You are one of the great ones of the musical world, one of the great ones of the world itself. You will go on and on. You will have all sorts of honours heaped on you. You will go about among lords and ladies, what is called Society—oh, I know, you'll not be able to help it. And all the time I remain what I am, just a poor little common girl, a member of a twopenny-halfpenny ladies' band. I'd rather you regretted having taken up with me before than after. So we ought to put it off."

He answered her as a good man who loves deeply can only answer. Her heart was convinced; but she turned her head aside and thought of further argument. Her eye fell on some music open on the rest, and mechanically, with a musician's instinct, she fingered a few bars. The strange familiarity of the theme startled her out of preoccupation. She continued the treble, and suddenly, with a cold shiver of wonder, crashed down both hands and played on.

Geoffrey strode up to her.

"What's that you're playing?"

She pointed hastily to the score. He bent over and stared at the faded manuscript.

"Why, good God," he cried, "it's my symphony."

She stopped, swung round and faced him with tears in her eyes.

"Yes. It's your symphony."

He took the thick manuscript from the rest and looked at the brown paper cover. On it was written:

"The Song of Life. A Sonata by Angelo Fardetti. September, 1878."

There was an amazed silence. Then, in a queer accusing voice, Elsa cried out: "Geoffrey, what have you done?"

"Heaven knows; but I've never known of this before. My God! Open the thing somewhere else and see."

So Elsa opened the manuscript at random and played, and again it was an echo of Geoffrey's symphony. He sank on a chair like a man crushed by an overwhelming fatality, and held his head in his hands.

"I oughtn't to have done it," he groaned. "But it was more than me. The thing overmastered me, it haunted me so that I couldn't sleep, and the more it haunted me the more it became my own, my very own. It was too big to lose."

Elsa held him with scared eyes.

"What are you talking of?" she asked.

"The way I came to write the Symphony. It's like a nightmare." He rose. "A couple of years ago," said he, "I bought a bundle of old music at a second-hand shop. It contained a collection of eighteenth-century stuff which I wanted. I took the whole lot, and on going through it, found a clump of old, discoloured manuscript partly in faded brown ink, partly in pencil. I tried it out of curiosity. The composition was feeble and the orchestration childish—I thought it the work of some dead and forgotten amateur—but it was crammed full of ideas, crammed full of beauty. I began tinkering it about,

to amuse myself. The more I worked on it the more it fascinated me. It became an obsession. Then I pitched the old score away and started it on my own."

"The *maestro* sold a lot of old music about that time," said Elsa.

The young man threw up his hands. "It's a fatality, an awful fatality. My God," he cried, "to think that I of all men should have stolen Angelo Fardetti's music!"

"No wonder he fainted yesterday," said Elsa.

It was catastrophe. Both regarded it in remorseful silence. Elsa said at last:

"You'll have to explain."

"Of course, of course. But what must the dear old fellow be thinking of me? What else but that I've got hold of this surreptitiously, while he was out of the room? What else but that I'm a mean thief?"

"He loves you, dear, enough to forgive you anything."

"It's the Unforgivable Sin. I'm wiped out. I cease to exist as an honest man. But I had no idea," he cried, with the instinct of self-defence, "that I had come so near him. I thought I had just got a theme here and there. I thought I had recast all the odds and ends according to my own scheme." He ran his eye over a page or two of the score. "Yes, this is practically the same as the old rough notes. But there was a lot, of course, I couldn't use. Look at that, for instance." He indicated a passage.

"I can't read it like you," said Elsa. "I must play it."

¶

SHE turned again to the piano, and played the thin, uninspired music that had no relation to the Symphony in E flat, and her eyes filled with tears as she remembered poignantly what the old man had told her of his "Song of Life." She went on and on until the music quickened into one of the familiar themes; and the tears fell, for she knew how poorly it was treated.

And then the door burst open. Elsa stopped dead in the middle of a bar, and they both turned round to find Angelo Fardetti standing on the threshold.

"Ah, no!" he cried, waving his thin hands. "Put that away. I did not know I had left it out. You must not play that. Ah, my son! my son!"

He rushed forward and clasped Geoffrey in his arms and kissed him on the cheeks, and murmured foolish, broken words:

"You have seen it. You have seen the miracle. The miracle of the good God. Oh, I am happy! My son, my son! I am the happiest of old men. Ah!" He shook him tremulously by both shoulders, and looked at him with a magical light in his old eyes. "You are really what our dear Hans calls a *wunderkind*. I have thought and you have executed. Santa Maria!" he cried, raising hands and eyes to heaven. "I thank you for this miracle that has been done!"

He turned away. Geoffrey, in blank bewilderment, made a step forward.

"*Maestro*, I never knew——"

But Elsa, knowledge dawning in her face, clasped her hand over his mouth—and he read her conjecture in her eyes, and drew a great breath. The old man came again and laughed and cried and wrung his hand, and poured out his joy and wonder into the amazed ears of the conscience-stricken young musician. The floodgates of speech were loosened.

"You see what you have done, *figlio mio*. You see the miracle. This—this poor rubbish is of me, Angelo Fardetti. On it I spent my life, my blood, my tears, and it is a thing of nothing, nothing. It is wind and noise; but by the miracle of God I breathed it into your spirit and it grew—and it grew into all that I dreamed—all that I dreamed and could not express. It is my 'Song of Life' sung as I could have sung it if I had been a great genius like you. And you have taken my song from my soul, from my heart, and all the sublime harmonies that could get no farther than this dull head you have put down in immortal music."

He went on exalted, and Elsa and Geoffrey stood pale and silent. To undeceive him was impossible.

"You see it is a miracle?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Geoffrey in a low voice.

"You never saw this before. Ha! ha!" he laughed delightedly. "Not a human soul has seen it or heard it. I kept it locked up there, in my little strong-box. And it was there all the time I was teaching you. And you never suspected."

"No, *maestro*, I did not," said the young man truthfully.

" Now, when did you begin to think of it ? How did it come to you—my ' Song of Life ' ? Did it sing in your brain while you were here and my brain was guiding yours, and then gather form and shape all through the long years ? "

" Yes," said Geoffrey. " That was how it came about."

Angelo took Elsa's plump cheeks between his hands and smiled. " Now you understand, my little Elsa, why I was so foolish yesterday. It was emotion, such emotion as a man has never felt before in the world. And now you know why I could not speak this morning. I thought of the letter you showed me. He confessed that old Angelo Fardetti had inspired him, but he did not know how. I know. The little spark flew from the soul of Angelo Fardetti into his soul, and it became a divine fire. And my ' Song of Life ' is true. The symphony was born in me—it died in me—it is re-born so gloriously in him. The seed is imperishable. It is eternal."

He broke away, laughing through a little sob, and stood by the window, once more gazing unseeingly at the opposite villas of Formosa Terrace. Geoffrey went up to him and fell on his knees—it was a most un-English thing to do—and took the old hand very reverently.

" *Padre mio*," said he.

" Yes, it is true. I am your father," said the old man in Italian, " and we are bound together by more than human ties." He laid his hand on the young man's head. " May all the blessings of God be upon you."

Geoffrey rose, the humblest man in England. Angelo passed his hand across his forehead, but his face bore a beautiful smile.

" I feel so happy," said he. " So happy that it is terrible. And I feel so strange. And my heart is full. If you will forgive me, I will lie down for a little." He sank on the horse-hair sofa and smiled up in the face of the young man. " And my head is full of the andante movement that I could never write, and you have made it like the harmonies before the Throne of God. Sit down at the piano and play it for me, my son."

So Geoffrey took his seat at the piano, and played, and as he played, he lost himself in his music. And Elsa crept near and stood by him in a dream while the wonderful story of the passing of human things was told. When the sound of the last chords had died away she put her arms round Geoffrey's neck and laid her cheek against his. For a while time stood still. Then they turned and saw the old man sleeping peacefully. She whispered a word, he rose, and they began to tiptoe out of the room. But suddenly instinct caused Elsa to turn her head again. She stopped and gripped Geoffrey's hand. She caught a choking breath.

" Is he asleep ? "

They went back and bent over him. He was dead.

Angelo Fardetti had died of a happiness too great for mortal man. For to which one of us in a hundred million is it given to behold the utter realization of his life's dream ?

A Famous View

THE carriage rolled rapidly onwards through fertile meadows, ornamented with splendid old oaks, and catching occasionally a glance of the majestic mirror of a broad and placid river. After passing through a pleasant village, the equipage stopped on a commanding eminence, where the beauty of English landscape was displayed in its utmost luxuriance. Here the Duke alighted and desired Jeanie to follow him. They paused for a moment on the brow of a hill to gaze on the unrivalled landscape which it presented. A huge sea of verdure, with crossing and intersecting promontories of massive and tufted groves, was tenanted by numberless flocks and herds, which seemed to wander unrestrained and unbounded through the rich pastures. The Thames, here turreted with villas and there garlanded with forests, moved on slowly and majestically, like the mighty monarch of the scene, to which all its other beauties were but accessories and bore on its bosom an hundred barks and skiffs, whose white sails and gaily fluttering pennons gave life to the whole.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Tobin's Palm

Concerning the strange vagaries of a "line of fate"

By O. HENRY

TOBIN and me, the two of us, went down to Coney one day, for there was four dollars between us, and Tobin had need of distractions. For there was Katie Mahorner, his sweetheart, of County Sligo, lost since she started for America three months before with two hundred dollars, her own savings, and one hundred dollars from the sale of Tobin's inherited estate, a fine cottage and pig on the Bog Shannaugh. And since the letter that Tobin got saying that she had started to come to him not a bit of news had he heard or seen of Katie Mahorner. Tobin advertised in the papers, but nothing could be found of the colleen.

So, to Coney me and Tobin went, thinking that a turn at the chutes and the smell of the popcorn might raise the heart in his bosom. But Tobin was a hard-headed man, and the sadness stuck in his skin. He ground his teeth at the crying balloons; he cursed the moving pictures; and, though he would drink whenever asked, he scorned Punch and Judy, and was for licking the tintype men as they came.

So I gets him down a side way on a board walk where the attractions were some less violent. At a little six-by-eight stall Tobin halts, with a more human look in his eye.

"'Tis here," says he, "I will be diverted. I'll have the palm of me hand investigated by the wonderful palmist of the Nile, and see if what is to be will be."

Tobin was a believer in signs and the unnatural in nature. He possessed illegal convictions in his mind along the subject of black cats, lucky numbers, and the weather predictions in the papers.

We went into the enchanted chicken coop, which was fixed mysterious with red cloth and pictures of hands with lines crossing 'em like a railroad centre. The sign over the door says it is Madame Zozo the Egyptian Palmist. There was a fat woman inside in a red jumper with pothooks and beasties embroidered upon it. Tobin gives her ten cents and extends one of his hands. She lifts Tobin's hand, which is own brother to the hoof of a drayhorse, and examines it to see whether 'tis a stone in the frog or a cast shoe he has come for.

"Man," says this Madame Zozo, "the line of your fate shows——"

"'Tis not me foot at all," says Tobin, interrupting. "Sure, 'tis no beauty, but ye hold the palm of me hand."

"The line shows," says the Madame, "that ye've not arrived at your time of life without bad luck. And there's more to come. The mount of Venus—or is that a stone bruise?—shows that ye've been in love. There's been trouble in your life on account of your sweetheart."

"'Tis Katie Mahorner she had references with," whispers Tobin to me in a loud voice to one side.

"I see," says the palmist, "a great deal of sorrow and tribulation with one whom ye cannot forget. I see the lines of designation point to the letter K and the letter M in her name."

"Whist!" says Tobin to me; "do ye hear that?"

"Look out," goes on the palmist, "for a dark man and a light woman; for they'll both bring ye trouble. Ye'll make a voyage upon the water very soon, and have a financial loss. I see one line that brings good luck. There's a man coming into your life who will fetch ye good fortune. Ye'll know him when ye see him by his crooked nose."

"Is his name set down?' asks Tobin. "'Twill be convenient in the way of greeting when he backs up to dump off the good luck."

"His name," says the palmist, thoughtful looking, "is not spelled out by the lines, but they indicate 'tis a long one, and the letter 'o' should be in it. There's no more to tell. Good-evening. Don't block up the door."

" 'Tis wonderful how she knows," says Tobin as we walked to the pier.

As we squeezed through the gates a nigger man sticks his lighted segar against Tobin's ear, and there is trouble. Tobin hammers his neck, and the women squeal, and by presence of mind I drag the little man out of the way before the police comes. Tobin is always in an ugly mood when enjoying himself.

On the boat going back, when the man calls " Who wants the good-looking waiter ?" Tobin tried to plead guilty, feeling the desire to blow the foam off a crock of suds, but when he felt in his pocket he found himself discharged for lack of evidence. Somebody had disturbed his change during the commotion. So we sat, dry, upon the stools, listening to the Dagoes fiddling on deck. If anything, Tobin was lower in spirits and less congenial with his misfortunes than when we started.

On a seat against the railing was a young woman dressed suitable for red automobiles, with hair the colour of an unsmoked meershaum. In passing by, Tobin kicks her foot without intentions, and, being polite to ladies when in drink, he tries to give his hat a twist while apologising. But he knocks it off, and the wind carries it overboard.

Tobin came back and sat down, and I began to look out for him, for the man's adversities were becoming frequent. He was apt, when pushed so close by hard luck, to kick the best dressed man he could see, and try to take command of the boat.

Presently Tobin grabs my arm and says, excited : " Jawn," says he, " do ye know what we're doing ? We're taking a voyage upon the water."

" There now," says I ; subdue yeself. The boat'll land in ten minutes more."

" Look," says he, " at the light lady upon the bench. And have ye forgotten the nigger man that burned me ear ? And isn't the money I had gone—a dollar sixty-five it was ? "

I thought he was no more than summing up his catastrophes so as to get violent with good excuse, as men will do, and I tried to make him understand such things was trifles.

" Listen," says Tobin. " Ye've no ear for the gift of prophecy or the miracles of the inspired. What did the palmist lady tell ye out of me hand ? 'Tis coming true before your eyes. ' Look out,' says she, ' for a dark man and a light woman ; they'll bring ye trouble.' Have ye forgot the nigger man, though he got some of it back from me fist ? Can ye show me a lighter woman than the blonde lady that was the cause of me hat falling in the water ? And where's the dollar sixty-five I had in me vest when we left the shooting gallery ? "

The way Tobin put it, it did seem to corroborate the art of prediction, though it looked to me that these accidents could happen to any one at Coney without the implication of palmistry.

Tobin got up and walked around on deck, looking close at the passengers out of his little red eyes. I asked him the interpretation of his movements. Ye never know what Tobin has in his mind until he begins to carry it out.

" Ye should know," says he, " I'm working out the salvation promised by the lines in me palm. I'm looking for the crooked-nose man that's to bring the good luck. 'Tis all that will save us. Jawn, did ye ever see a straighter-nosed gang of hellions in the days of your life ? "

¶

'TWAS the nine-thirty boat, and we landed and walked up-town through Twenty-second Street, Tobin being without his hat.

On a street corner, standing under a gas-light and looking over the elevated road at the moon, was a man. A long man he was, dressed decent, with a segar between his teeth, and I saw that his nose made two twists from bridge to end, like the wriggle of a snake. Tobin saw it at the same time, and I heard him breathe hard like a horse when you take the saddle off.

" Good-night to ye," Tobin says to the man. The man takes out his segar and passes the compliments, sociable.

" Would ye hand us your name," asks Tobin, " and let us look at the size of it ? It may be our duty to become acquainted with ye."

" My name," says the man, polite, " is Friedenhausman—Maximus G. Friedenhausman."

" 'Tis the right length," says Tobin. " Do you spell it with an ' o ' anywhere down the stretch of it ? "

" I do not," says the man.

" *Can* ye spell it with an ' o ' ? " inquires Tobin, turning anxious.

" If your conscience," says the man with

the nose, " is indisposed towards foreign idioms ye might, to please yourself, smuggle the letter into the penultimate syllable."

" 'Tis well," says Tobin. " Ye're in the presence of Jawn Malone and Daniel Tobin. "

" 'Tis highly appreciated," says the man, with a bow. " And now since I cannot conceive that ye would hold a spelling bee upon the street corner, will ye name some reasonable excuse for being at large ? "

" By the two signs," answers Tobin, trying to explain, " which ye display according to the reading of the Egyptian palmist from the sole of me hand, ye've been nominated to offset with good luck the lines of trouble leading to the nigger man and the blonde lady with her feet crossed in the boat, besides the financial loss of a dollar sixty-five, all so far fulfilled according to Hoyle."

The man stopped smoking and looked at me.

" Have ye any amendments," he asks, " to offer to that statement, or are ye one too ? I thought by the looks of ye, ye might have him in charge."

" None," says I to him, " except that as one horseshoe resembles another so are ye the picture of good luck as predicted by the hand of me friend. If not, then the lines of Danny's hand may have been crossed, I don't know."

" There's two of ye," says the man with the nose, looking up and down for the sight of a policeman. " I've enjoyed your company immense. Good-night."

With that he shoves his segar in his mouth and moves across the street, stepping fast. But Tobin sticks close to one side of him and me at the other.

" What ! " says he, stopping on the opposite sidewalk and pushing back his hat ; " do ye follow me ? I tell ye," he says, very loud, " I'm proud to have met ye. But it is my desire to be rid of ye. I am off to me home."

" Do," says Tobin, leaning against his sleeve. " Do be off to your home. And I will sit at the door of it till ye come out in the morning. For the dependence is upon ye to obviate the curse of the nigger man and the blonde lady and the financial loss of the one-sixty-five."

" 'Tis a strange hallucination," says the man, turning to me as a more reasonable lunatic. " Hadn't ye better get him home ? "

" Listen, man," says I to him. " Daniel Tobin is as sensible as he ever was. Maybe he is a bit deranged on account of having drink enough to disturb but not enough to settle his wits, but he is no more than following out the legitimate path of his superstitions and predicaments, which I will explain to you." With that I relates the facts about the palmist lady and how the finger of suspicion points to him as an instrument of good fortune. " Now, understand," I concludes, " my position in this riot. I am the friend of me friend Tobin, according to me interpretations. 'Tis easy to be a friend to the prosperous, for it pays ; 'tis not hard to be a friend to the poor, for ye get puffed up by gratitude and have your picture printed standing in front of a tenement with a scuttle of coal and an orphan in each hand. But it strains the art of friendship to be true friend to a born fool. And that's what I'm doing," says I, " for, in my opinion, there's no fortune to be read from the palm of me hand that wasn't printed there with the handle of a pick. And, though ye've get the crookedest nose in New York City, I misdoubt that all the fortune-tellers doing business could milk good luck from ye. But the lines of Danny's hand pointed to ye fair, and I'll assist him to experiment with ye until he's convinced ye're dry."

After that the man turns, sudden, to laughing. He leans against a corner and laughs considerable. Then he claps me and Tobin on the backs of us and takes us by an arm apiece.

" 'Tis my mistake," says he. " How could I be expecting anything so fine and wonderful to be turning the corner upon me ? I came near being found unworthy. Hard by," says he, " is a café, snug and suitable for the entertainment of idiosyncrasies. Let us go there and have drink while we discuss the unavailability of the categorical."

So saying, he marched me and Tobin to the back room of a saloon, and ordered the drinks, and laid the money on the table. He looks at me and Tobin like brothers of his, and we have the segars.

" Ye must know," says the man of destiny, " that me walk in life is one that is called the literary. I wander abroad be night seeking idiosyncrasies in the masses and truth in the heavens above. When ye came upon me I was in contemplation of the elevated road in conjunction with the chief

luminary of night. The rapid transit is poetry and art: the moon but a tedious, dry body, moving by rote. But these are private opinions, for, in the business of literature, the conditions are reversed. 'Tis me hope to be writing a book to explain the strange things I have discovered in life."

"Ye will put me in a book," says Tobin, disgusted; "will ye put me in a book?"

"I will not," says the man, "for the covers will not hold ye. Not yet. The best I can do is to enjoy ye meself, for the time is not ripe for destroying the limitations of print. Ye would look fantastic in type. All alone by meself must I drink this cup of joy. But, I thank ye, boys; I am truly grateful."

"The talk of ye," says Tobin, blowing through his moustache and pounding the table with his fist, "is an eyesore to me patience. There was good luck promised out of the crook of your nose, but ye bear fruit like the bang of a drum. Ye resemble, with your noise of books, the wind blowing through a crack. Sure, now, I would be thinking the palm of me hand lied but for the coming true of the nigger man and the blonde lady and——"

"Whist!" says the long man; "would ye be led astray by physiognomy? Me nose will do what it can within bounds. Let us have these glasses filled again, for 'tis good to keep idiosyncrasies well moistened, they being subject to deterioration in a dry moral atmosphere."

So, the man of literature makes good, to my notion, for he pays, cheerful, for everything, the capital of me and Tobin being exhausted by prediction. But Tobin is sore, and drinks quiet, with the red showing in his eye.

By and by we moved out, for 'twas eleven o'clock, and stands a bit upon the sidewalk. And then the man says he must be going home, and invites me and Tobin to walk that way. We arrives on a side street two blocks away where there is a stretch of brick houses with high stoops and iron fences. The man stops at one of them and looks up at the top windows which he finds dark.

"'Tis me humble dwelling," says he, "and I begin to perceive by the signs that me wife has retired to slumber. Therefore I will venture a bit in the way of hospitality. 'Tis me wish that ye enter the basement-room, where we dine, and partake of a reasonable refreshment. There will be some fine cold fowl and cheese and a bottle or two of ale. Ye will be welcome to enter and eat, for I am indebted to ye for diversions."

The appetite and conscience of me and Tobin was congenial to the proposition, though 'twas sticking hard in Danny's superstitions to think that a few drinks and a cold lunch should represent the good fortune promised by the palm of his hand.

"Step down the steps," say the man with the crooked nose, "and I will enter by the door above and let ye in. I will ask the new girl we have in the kitchen," says he, "to make ye a pot of coffee to drink before ye go. 'Tis fine coffee Katie Mahorner makes for a green girl just landed three months. Step in," says the man, "and I'll send her down to ye."

John Evelyn Tastes The King's Fruit

AUGUST 19. I saw the magnificent entrie of the French Ambassador Colbert, receiv'd in the Banqueting House. I had never seene a richer coach than that which he came in to Whitehall. Standing by his Majesty at dinner in the Presence, there was of that rare fruit call'd the *King-pine*, growing in Barbados and the West Indies, the first of them I had ever seene. His Majesty having cut it up, was pleased to give me a piece off his owne plate to taste of, but in my opinion it falls short of those ravishing varieties of delicious-ness described in Captain Lignon's History, and others; but possibly it might, or certainly was, much impaired in coming so far. It has yet a gratefull acidity, but tastes more like the quince and the melon than of any fruite he mentions.

The Gunner of Percé Rock

Drama and romance in press-gang days

By GILBERT PARKER

THE rock was a wall, and the wall was an island that had once been a long promontory, like a battlement, jutting out hundreds of yards into the Gulf. At one point it was pierced by an archway. Its sides were almost sheer; its top was flat and level. Upon the sides there was no verdure; upon the top centuries had made a green field. The wild geese as they flew north, myriad flocks of gulls, gannets and cormorants, and all manner of fowl of the sea, had builded upon the top until it grew rich with grass and shrub. The nations of the air sent their legions here to bivouac. The discord of a thousand languages might be heard far out to sea or far in upon the land. Millions of the feathered races swarmed there; sometimes the air above was darkened by clouds of them. No fog-bell on a rockbound coast might warn mariners more ominously than these battalions of adventurers on the Percé Rock.

No human being had ever mounted to this eyrie, nor scaled the bulwarks of this feathered Eden. Three hundred feet below shipbuilders might toil and fishermen hover, but the lofty home of the marauders of the air had not yet suffered the invasion of man. It was a legend that this mighty palisade had once been a bridge of rock stretched across the gulf, builded by the gods of the land who smote with granite arms and drove back defeated the appalling gods of the sea.

Generations of fishermen had looked upon the yellowish, reddish limestone of the Percé Rock with an adventuring eye, but it would seem that not even the tiny, clinging hoof of a chamois or of a wild goat might find a foothold upon the straight sides of it. Three hundred feet was a long way to climb hand over hand, so for centuries the Percé Rock in the wide St. Lawrence Gulf remained solitary and unconquered.

But there came a day when man, the spoiler, single-handed and alone, should assail it.

This is the tale that is told of it: A hundred years ago, when England was fighting France, the French squadron, fresh from destroying the fishing-stations on the Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, was lying off the coast of Gaspé, near to this vast rock called Percé. Just beyond, in Mal Baie, was good shelter, but because of the fishing-posts at Percé, where the commissariat could get fresh fish and food, Richery, the French Admiral, chose to lie in the tideway before Percé Rock. The master gunner of the Admiral's ship was a Jerseyman who, being in St. Malo, had been pressed into the service. In vain he had protested. There was his Norman accent, his captors said; that was evidence enough, and if he was not a citizen of France he should be, for French was his language. So he was carried off in the *Invincible*, and with her sailed the seas looking for a British ship to fight.

His name was Antoine Robichon, and he had owned a fishing-brig called the *Charming Nancy*, which sailed year after year to this very port of Percé, bringing Jersey fishermen and carrying away again the dried cod to Europe. When he was pressed into the French Navy at St. Malo, his brother, who was first mate of the *Charming Nancy*, took her on to Gaspé on his brother's business just the same as if the brother himself were sailing her.

Meanwhile, Antoine was waiting in the tideway where he had come and gone for ten years, seeing on the shore the fishing-posts of the great Company, where he had so often eaten hard tack, drunk juniper tea, and danced with the Master's daughters.

As Antoine leaned on his great gun, looking out to the shore the first day the squadron arrived off Percé, he wondered if the daughters were there now; whether Minois, the youngest—Minois, the madcap, Minois, the hunter, who shot deer like a

Mohican—was still there. It was now two years since he had seen this Bay of Percé. She was seventeen then; she was nineteen now—Minois Carnaval, the Master's youngest daughter. Antoine had asked her for a kiss when he bade her good-bye last, and she had laughed in his face; but he also remembered that she had waved her red 'kerchief from the roof of the fishing-post as the *Charming Nancy* sailed away, and that she remained on the roof as long as the *Charming Nancy* could be seen.

Was she still there? And if she was, what would she think of him—a gunner, now, on a French ship! He might be ordered to bombard the very house where she lived; might, indeed, fire the shot which should kill her! She was French, but she was Canadian, and her country was now England. Two generations had nearly passed since Canada had been yielded up to the English, and in that time Jersey Normans, more English than the English, had chiefly occupied the district called Gaspé.

Antoine studied the matter hard, and the more he thought of it the harder to crack the nut seemed. His patriotism was not of that sort which smiles at martyrdom. He was of the easy-going kind who do things because they are expected to do them, from whom habit takes a load of responsibility. He was quite as well treated in this French ship as he would be in an English ship, and he could be on easier terms with his present comrades, because he spoke English badly; but these sailors could understand his language and he theirs. He had stubbornly resisted being pressed, but he had been knocked on the head—and there was an end of it! What was the good of being knocked on the head again or being hung at the yard-arm, if one could help it! He was an expert gunner, for he had served four years with the artillery at Elizabeth Castle in Jersey. When he was drafted in he had asked to become a gunner, and did such excellent work against some Spanish privateers that the admiral, delighted—for expert men were scarce—gave him a gun; and presently, because of his great skill, made him master gunner.

He grew fond of one great gun; he called her "ma couzaine," for everything that a Jersey man comes to love he calls his cousin. His comrades, like himself, did not have much concern with questions of loyalty or patriotism. They were ready to fight, but that was because it was expected of them, and it would make little difference to them whether it was against the English or against the Turks, or even against another French ship. Fighting was their trade, and they were expected to fight the old *Invincible* in action for all that she was capable.

Yet Antoine had what was almost like a thrill when he saw the British flag run up on the posts of the Fishing Company as they sailed into the bay. His heart, too, thumped a little. Involuntarily he looked up to the French tricolour flying over his head. It was curious that there should be such a difference in two pieces of linen—or was it silk? No, it was linen. Just a little different arrangement of colour, and yet this flag on the roof of the big fishing-shed seemed to rouse his pulses to a heat.

"Man doux d'la vie! There is the fleg of old Carnaval!" he said. "P'raps Minois put it up—that English fleg!"

Whoever put it up, there was the English flag defiantly flying on the huts of the great fishing-shed, and—yes!—there were the two old twenty-pounders trained on the French squadron.

"Oh, my good! Oh, mai grand doux!" said Antoine, with a low rolling laugh. "Oh, that is very dam funnee!"

The sight of the British flag loosened his tongue in English. It was undoubtedly ridiculous, these two twenty-pounders training on a whole fleet. Presently there was more defiance—the Jersey flag, a nice oblong piece of white linen with two diagonal red stripes; it was hoisted on the house of the Master.

"Oh, my good!" said Antoine again. "It will be the old man and the three boys next. What, what? Million thunders, look at that!"

He laughed uproariously, forgetful of discipline, of everything save the sight of old man Carnaval, his three sons, and his three daughters—marching with muskets from the house to the great shed.

Antoine heard a laugh behind him. He looked round, then straightened himself and stood at attention. It was Admiral Richery, guffawing almost as loudly as Antoine himself had done.

"That's a big splutter in a little pot, gunner," said he. "Petticoats, too!" He put his telescope to his eye. "And, son of Peter, scarce out of their teens! The Lord protect us, they are going to fight my squadron!" He laughed again till the

tears came. The glory of Heaven, but it is droll that! It is a farce au diable! They have humour, these fisherfolk—eh, gunner?"

"Old man Carnaval will fight, just the same," answered Antoine, bridling up inside.

"Oh, ho! You know these people, my gunner?" said the Admiral.

"These ten years, Excellency," answered Antoine, "and by your leave, Excellency, I will tell you how."

And, not waiting for permission (after the manner of a Jerseyman), he told the Admiral the story of his old life and of his being pressed.

"Very good," said the Admiral coolly. "You Jersey folk used to be Frenchmen; now that you are a Frenchman again, you shall do something for the flag. You see that twenty-pounder yonder, behind the wall? Very well; dismount it. Then we'll send in a flag of truce and parley with 'old man Carnaval,' for his jests are worth attention and politeness. There's a fellow at the gun—no!—he has gone. Take good aim and dismount the gun in one shot. Ready now—you have a good range."

The whole matter went through Antoine's mind as the Admiral spoke. If he refused to fire, he would be strung up to the yard-arm; if he fired and missed, perhaps other gunners would fire; and, once started, they might raze the fishing-post. If he fired and dismounted the gun, the matter would be only a jest; for as such, so far, the Admiral regarded it. In dismounting the gun and furthering the jest, he would be saving the Carnavals and helping England, too.

Well, to think that he must fire against the place where he had got his living these ten years! Why, he and Minois had many a time sat gossiping on this very gun that he was asked to dismount!

There was no time to weigh the matter further; the Admiral was frowning. So Antoine smiled, as though the business was pleasing him, and prepared to fire.

He cast away the tackle and breechings, took off the apron, pricked a cartridge, primed, bruised the priming, and covered the vent. Then he took his range steadily, quietly. There was a brisk wind blowing from the south—he must allow for that; but the wind was stopped somewhat in its course by the Percé Rock—he must allow for that. He knew the wall behind which it was, its weakest part—he must take that into account. He had got what he thought was the right elevation; the distance was considerable, but he believed that he could do the business. He had a cool, somewhat stolid head, but his eye was quick and well trained.

He was ready. Suddenly a girl appeared, running round the corner of the building, making straight for the gun. It was Minois! He himself had taught her how to fire that very gun. She was going to be gunner now. One of her brothers was running towards the other gun; a second was following her. Antoine started. He had not taken this into account.

"Fire, you fool," cried the Admiral, "or you'll kill the girl."

Antoine laid a hand on himself, as it were. Every nerve in his body seemed tingling, his legs trembled, but his eye was steady. He took the sight once more, coolly, then blew on the match. The girl was within thirty feet of the gun—the madcap Minois!

He blew on the match again and fired!

¶

WHEN the smoke cleared away, he saw that the gun was dismounted, and not fifteen feet from it stood the girl as if she had been turned into stone, looking—looking dazedly at the gun.

He heard a laugh behind him. There was the Admiral walking away, his telescope under his arm. Presently, Antoine saw a boat lowered, even as one of the twenty-pounders on the shore replied impudently to the shot he had fired. The officers were laughing with the Admiral, and pointing towards Antoine.

"A good shot!" he heard the Captain say.

"Was it?" said Antoine to himself. Was it? Then it would be the last that he would ever fire against the English. The sight of that girl upon the shore had decided him, had quickened some feeling in him. He looked over the side, and saw the boat drawing away with the white flag of truce in the hands of a midshipman. He wished he was in that boat; he then could see Minois face to face. There she was, talking to her father, and stamping her foot, too. She had a temper, had Minois! Never mind, she was the finest girl in all the world.

He would desert to-night. No—not desert, that was not the word; he would

escape, and go ashore to Minois! He would go back to the English flag, no matter what happened.

As he sponged the gun, his "ma couzaine," he made his plans. Swish-swash, the sponge staff ran in and out; he would try to steal away at dog-watch. He struck the sponge smartly on "ma couzaine's" muzzle, cleansing it—he would have to slide into the water like a rat and swim so softly—so softly! He reached for a fresh cartridge and thrust it into the throat of "ma couzaine" as far as he could reach and, as he laid the seam downwards, he said to himself: "If they see me, one minute I can hold my breath under water; in one minute I can swim a hundred yards. Good!" He lovingly placed the wad to the cartridge and, in three strokes of the rammer, drove wad and cartridge home with the precision of a drill. It was a long swim to shore, but if he got a fair start he thought he could do it. As he unstopped the touch-hole and tried with the priming-wire whether the cartridge was home, he pictured to himself being challenged, perhaps by Minois, and his reply. Then he imagined how she would say: "Oh, my good!" in true Jersey fashion, as he had taught her, and then—well, then, he hadn't got any further than that. Thinking was hard work for Antoine.

By the time he had rammed home wad and shot, however, he had come upon a fresh thought; and it stunned him. The Admiral would send a squad of men to search for him, and if he wasn't found they would probably bombard the post—"swab the caboose," he said to himself. As he put the apron carefully on "ma couzaine," he almost burst his head with hard thinking. . . . No, it wouldn't do to go to Percé village and take refuge with the Carnavals. And it wouldn't do to make for the woods of the interior, for the old Admiral might take his revenge out of the post. And no wonder, for, he said to himself with a simple vanity, he, Antoine Robichon, was a fine gunner, and "ma couzaine" would never behave so well with anyone else. "Ma couzaine" had been used to playing ugly pranks at times, especially if it was blowing fresh. She had once torn her tackle out of the ring-bolt in the deck, and had killed more than one sailor in her mad debauch of freedom. She had always behaved well under his hand, and it seemed to him that when he blew on the match to fire her the muzzle gaped in a grin of delight. Of course, the fleet would be furious at losing him, and "ma couzaine" there, the biggest gun in the fleet, without her master! So they would pepper the place if they did not find him. Decidedly, he must not go to old man Carnaval's. No harm should come to Minois's people that he could prevent. What was he to do?

He leaned his arms on the gun and shook his head helplessly at the village; then he turned his head away from the land. All at once his look seemed to lose itself in a long aisle of ever-widening, ever-brightening arches till a vast wilderness of splendour swallowed it. It was a hole in the wall, the archway piercing the great Rock. He raised his eyes to the Rock. Its myriad inhabitants shrieked and clattered and circled overhead. The shot from "ma couzaine" had roused them, and they had risen up like a cloud, and were scolding like a million fishwives over this insult to their peace.

As he looked, Antoine got a new idea. If he could get on the top of that massive wall, not a hundred fleets could dislodge him, nor an army follow him. A dozen stones would prevent that; one musket could defeat any forlorn hope. He would be the first man that ever gave battle to a whole fleet. Besides, if he took refuge on the Rock, there would be no grudge against Percé village or the Carnavals, and the Admiral would not attack them!

There, he had worked it out, and it was now a question between him and the Admiral and his fleet; the Carnavals were out of it. There was the young sous-lieutenant now on the shore with his flag of truce, talking to "ol' man Carnaval." There was Minois not ten feet away, and there was the young sous-lieutenant bowing and scraping to her. "Man doux d'la vie, what did he mean by that!" reflected Antoine. It was all right between old man Carnaval and the sous-lieutenant—that was clear. There, they all were shaking hands now. It was surer than ever that he, Antoine, must carry on a campaign independent of the Carnavals. If he didn't succeed, why then he would be hung to the yard-arm or shot. But if he stayed where he was, on the *Invincible*, he was in just as much danger from a British gun in battle.

"Bà sû!" Antoine said to himself, the

only thing was to try and climb Percé Rock. What a thing to tell if he did it and came safe out of the scrape. It would increase the worth of the *Charming Nancy* at least fifty per cent. Certainly he must do it. He had pointed out to Minois two years ago the spot where he thought it could be done. Just at this particular point the wall was not quite so steep, and there were narrow ledges and lumps of stone and natural steps and footholds and little pinnacles which the fingers could grip and where a man might rest. The weather had been scorching hot, too; the rocks were dry as a bone, and there would be no danger of slipping.

Yes, he would try it in any case. He would be deserter, patriot, adventurer, gunner, master of the *Charming Nancy*, and Jerseyman, all in one. He would need—what? If he got to the top he would need twine for hauling up rope—the Carnavals would give him rope when the time came. He would need stone and flint, and he also had some matches. A knife, a hammer and one quilt—he must have the quilt for the nights, though he well knew what the weight of it would mean in climbing. Then there was food. Well, perhaps he should starve to death up there, but he would take what was left of to-day's rations, of which he had eaten very little; there was about a half-pound of biscuit, near half-a-pint of pease, a half-pint of oatmeal, and two ounces of cheese. He could live on that for at least three days. He also had a horn of good arrack. When that was gone—well, he was taking chances! If he died of thirst, it was no worse than the yard-arm. The most important thing was a few hundred feet of fine strong twine, and he knew there was as much as he needed in the store-room amongst the cordage. He would get that at once and conceal it, for it was the one thing he could not do without.

There was the sous-lieutenant coming back to the *Invincible*; he was waving his hand towards Minois. It was all very fine, he reflected, fretfully, to be a sous-lieutenant and wear a gold-handled sword; but he, Antoine, would climb Percé Rock, and the fleet and Minois and the sous-lieutenant should see him do a thing that had never before been done!

But how would Minois know who it was, perched on Percé Rock? He had not thought of that. What signal was there? There was none that he knew. Well, if he got away safely from the *Invincible*, he would go to ol' man Carnaval's, let her know, and then go straight on to Percé Rock. Though it would be moonlight, the path of ascent was on the south side, out of the view of the fleet.

Very well, that settled it. He patted "ma couzaine" tenderly. He was sorry to leave her, but it had to be.

He was, however, a man of habit. The rest of the day he did his duty as faithfully as though he expected to be at his post the next morning. He gave the usual instructions to the gunsmith and armourer; he inspected the small-arms; he chose a man, as was his custom, for the gunroom watch; and he ate his supper phlegmatically when the hour came.

¶

IT was the last quarter of the moon, and the neap tide was running low, when Antoine let himself softly down into the water. He had the blanket tied on his head; the food, matches, and so on, were inside the blanket, and the twine was in his pocket. He had not been seen, and he dropped away quietly astern. Another ship lay in his path, and he must be careful in passing her. He had got clear of the *Invincible* while the moon was partially obscured. Now, however, it was shining, but not very brightly. He came so near the other ship that he could see the watch and he could smell the hot tar and pitch which had been used on the seams after caulking. There was no sea and very little wind, and the watch was not alert. He was so close at one moment that he could hear the laughter of the young foremast-men as they turned in. He moved his arms very gently, propelling himself chiefly by his legs. At last he was clear of the fleet. Now it was a question of when his desertion would be discovered. All he asked was two clear hours. By that time the deed would be done, if he could climb the Percé Rock at all.

He touched bottom; he was so far safe. He was on the Percé sands. His blanket was scarcely wetted. He wrung the water out of his clothes and ran softly up the shore. Suddenly he was met by a cry of "Halt!" and a "Who goes there?" and he stopped short at the point of a bayonet. He recognised the voice; it was ol' man Carnaval's.

He said: "Sh!" and gave his name—Antoine Robichon of the *Charming Nancy*. The old man knew the voice. He nearly dropped his musket in surprise. Antoine's tale of his misfortunes was soon given, but he had not yet told of his present plans when he heard a quick footstep, and Minois was at her father's side. Unlike the old man, she did drop her musket and, with an exclamation, impulsively threw her arms round his neck and kissed him on the cheek.

"There!" she said. "That's for the captain of the *Charming Nancy*, who's come in through a fleet of Frenchmen!" She thought he had stolen into the harbour with his little ship under the very nose of the Admiral and his squadron.

Ruefully, Antoine had to tell her the truth. She trembled with excitement at the story of how he had been pressed at St. Malo and all that came after until this very day when he had dismounted the gun not fifteen feet from where she stood.

"Man alive!" she said. "It was you, Antoine—it was you that dismounted that gun and nearly killed me!"

"It was hard work not killing you," he answered.

"Go along with Minois," said ol' man Carnaval. "Moïse is at the house; he'll help you get away into the woods."

That was not Antoine's plan, but he did not intend it for Carnaval's ears. Time was short, his position was perilous. He offered no explanation to the old man, but hurried away with Minois, telling her his purpose as he went. Suddenly she stopped short.

"Antoine Robichon," said she, "you're a fool! You can't climb the Percé Rock. No one has ever done it, and you mustn't try; you'll be safe where Moïse will hide you. You shan't climb the rock—ah, no, no!" She did not understand his reasons.

He pointed towards the post.

"They wouldn't leave a stick standing there if you hide me. No, I'm going to the top of Percé, or break my neck—v'là!"

Here was a revelation! She had never thought Antoine capable of so much thinking. For a moment she could only say: "Mon doux terrible! Mon doux terrible! Just think of that—to save us all and to climb Percé Rock!"

Then his intention suddenly inspired her.

"Antoine," she said, clutching his arm, "if you go to the top of Percé Rock, so will I!"

In spite of his anxiety, he laughed.

"Ah, bà, all right!" he said. "But I must get up first. Then I'll drop a cord and you'll tie on a small rope if you've got enough. You'll tie it round your waist and come on; and then, if you slip or get tired, I'll hold you safe with the rope. But see—but see," his voice dropped, "you can't stay up there with me all alone, Minois—and, besides, it wouldn't do—the Admiral'd be firing on you, too!"

"I can't stay alone with you, mon doux!" She was angry now. She could have slapped his face. "I'd like to know why I can't. If you ever want me to kiss you again in all your life, Antoine Robichon, you'll thump that stupid brain of yours for more sense to say. Come now, am I going up or not?"

"Yes," he said, "you can go up if you'll go down again when I tell you."

"I'll go down when you ask me, silly!" she said.

"Then I'll go straight to the Rock now," said Antoine. "When they miss me there'll be a pot boiling, I can tell you!" He unloosened the blanket from his head. "If I get up," he said, "I'll let the string down for the rope, and you'll tie this blanket on to the rope. I'll have to run my chance of their not missing me before that. Once on top, they can't hurt me—nothing at all. . . . Ah, bê! Good-bye, Minois."

"Oh, my good! Oh, my good!" said the girl, with a sudden change of mood. "To think you have been gone two years, and now you come back like this! And perhaps——" But as he was about to put his arms round her, she pushed him away, dashed the tears from her eyes, and bade him go.

He had a new confidence in his enterprise. Hadn't Minois kissed him? Hadn't she wiped the tears out of her eyes? Hadn't she wanted to come with him to the top of Percé Rock? She was the sort of girl to be the wife of the master of the *Charming Nancy!* Without doubt she was. But if she came to Percé Rock, if she got up—well, he'd get up himself first, and then he'd try and think out the rest of it, but thinking was terribly hard work. It was worse than fighting a ship to leeward of the enemy.

The tide was now well out; the moon was shining very brightly. He reached the point where, if the Rock was to be scaled at all, the ascent must be made. For a

distance there was shelving where a fair foothold might be had by a fearless man with a steady head and sure balance. After that came about a hundred feet where he would have to draw himself up hand over hand, where was no natural pathway, where crevices must be found for feet and hands. Woe be to him if his head grew dizzy, his foot slipped, or his strength gave out, his body would be broken to pieces on the hard sand below. If that second stage was passed, the ascent thence to the top was easier; for, though nearly as steep, it had ledges and offered fair vantage to a man who had a foot like a mountain goat. Antoine had been aloft all weathers and his toes were as strong as another man's foot, and surer.

He started. These toes of his caught in crevices, held on to ledges, glued themselves to smooth surfaces; the knees clung like a rough rider's to a saddle; the big hands, when once they got a purchase, fastened like an octopus or an air-cup. Slowly, slowly up, foot by foot, yard by yard, until one-third of the distance was climbed!

The suspense and strain were immeasureable. It was like bringing the *Charming Nancy* alone through a gale with a windward tide, while she yaws and quivers over twice the length of her bulge; or it was like watching a lower-deck gun straining under a heavy sea, with the lanyards and port tacks flying, and no knowing when the great machine would fly from her carriage and make havoc of the ship and the crew. But he struggled on and on, and now at last he had reached a jutting piece of rock with a sort of flying pinnacle, like a hook for the gods to hang their shields on, if shields they carried.

Here Antoine ventured to look below. He half-expected to see Minois, but there was only the white sand, and the only sound was the long wash of the gulf. He drew the horn of arrack from his pocket and drank. He had two hundred feet more to climb; and the next hundred—that would test him, that would be the ordeal!

There was no time to lose. While he hung there a musket shot could pick him off from below, and there was no telling how soon his desertion would be discovered. He hoped it would not be till morning. He started again. This was travail indeed. His rough fingers, his toes, which were almost like horn, began to bleed. Once or twice he swung quite clear of the wall, hanging by his fingers to catch a surer foothold to right or left, and just getting it by an inch—or less, sometimes. The strain and tension were terrible. His head appeared to swell and fill with blood; on top it hurt him so much that it seemed to him it must burst. His neck was aching horribly with the constant looking up, the skin of his knees was gone, his ankles were bruised. But he must keep on till he got to the top, or until he fell.

He was fighting on in a kind of dream, which was quite apart from all usual feelings of this world. The earth itself seemed far away, and he was toiling among vastnesses, himself a giant with immense frame and huge, sprawling limbs. It was like the dreams which come in sleep, when the body is an elusive, stupendous mass that falls into space after a confused struggle with immensities. It was all mechanical, vague, almost numb—this effort to overcome a mountain. Yet it was precise and hugely expert, too; for, though there was a strange mist on the brain, the body felt its way with a singular certainty, as might some molluscan dweller of the sea, which is sensitive like a plant, with intuition like an animal. Yet, sometimes, it seemed that this vast body overcoming the mountain would let go its hold and slide away into the darkness of the depths. There was a strange convulsive shiver in every nerve.

God have mercy, the time was come now!

¶

NO, not yet. At the very instant when it seemed this panting flesh and blood would be shaken off by the granite force repelling it, the fingers like great antennæ touched horns of rock, jutting out from ledges, on the third escarpment of the wall. Here was the last point of the second and worst stage of the journey. Slowly, heavily, the body drew up to the shelf of limestone, and crouched in an inert bundle. There it lay for a long time.

While the long minutes went by, a voice kept calling up from below—calling, calling, at first eagerly, then anxiously, then with terror. By and by the bundle of life stirred, took shape, raised itself, and was changed into a man again, a thinking conscious being, who now understood the meaning of this sound coming up from the earth—or was it the sea?—below. It was a human voice

which had at last pierced the awful exhaustion, the deadly labour, the peril and strife which had numbed the brain of a man, while the body in its instinct for existence still clung to the rocky ledges. It had called the man back to earth—he was no longer a great animal, and the rock a monster with skin and scales of stone.

" Antoine ! Antoine ! Ah, Antoine ! " called the voice.

Now he knew. He answered down :

" All right ! All right, Minois ! "

" Are you at the top ? "

" No, but the rest is easy."

" Hurry, hurry, Antoine ! If they should come before you reach the top ! "

" I'll soon be there. Ah, but, Minois, it was awful ! "

" Are you hurt, Antoine ? "

" No ; but my fingers are in rags. I am going now, à bi'tôt ! "

" Antoine ! "

" Sh ! Do not speak. I am starting."

There was silence for what seemed hours to the girl below. Foot by foot the man climbed on, no less cautious because the ascent was easier, for he had become weaker. But he was on the monster's neck now, and soon he should set his heel on it—he was not to be shaken off.

At last the victorious moment came. Over a jutting ledge he drew himself up by sheer strength and the rubber-like grip of his lacerated fingers, body, legs, knees, and now he lay flat and breathless upon the ground.

How soft and cool was it ! This was long, sweet grass that touched his face, which made a couch like down for the battered, wearied body. Surely this travail had been almost more than mortal. And what was this vast fluttering over his head, this million-voiced discord round him, like the buffetings and cries of spirits who welcome another to their torment ? He raised his head and laughed in triumph. These were the cormorants, gulls and gannets on the Percé Rock.

Antoine Robichon had done what man had never done before him ; he had done it in the night, with only the moon to lighten the monstrous labour of his incredible adventure ; he had accomplished it without help of any mortal sort.

Legions of birds circled over him with wild cries, so shrill and scolding that at first he did not hear Minois's voice calling up to him. At last, however remembering, he leaned over the cliff and saw her standing in the moonlight far below.

Her voice came up to him indistinctly, because of the clatter of the birds : " Antoine ! Antoine ! " She could not see him, for this part of the rock was hidden in shadow.

" Ah bà, all right ! " he said and, taking hold of one end of the twine he had brought, he let the roll fall. It dropped almost at Minois's feet. She fastened the rope she had got at the post to the end of it and called to Antoine. He drew it up quickly. She had found no rope long enough, so she had tied three together. Antoine must splice them perfectly. Once more he let down the twine, and she fastened it to his blanket. It was a heavy strain on the twine, but the blanket and the food enclosed were got up safely. She called for him to lower again, and this time he hauled up tobacco, tea, matches, needles, cotton, a knife, and a horn of rum. Now she called for him to splice the ropes properly. There was no time to do that, but he tied them firmly together and let the great coil down. This time was drawn up a musket and ammunition and another blanket. Again it was let down, and he drew up a crowbar, a handspike, and some tin dishes, which rattled against the side of the great Rock derisively. Again the rope went down, and two bundles of sticks and faggots were attached, with flint and steel, also a small roll of coarse cotton and a bearskin. Last of all came a small tent and a bundle of woman's clothes.

The rope did not come down again at once.

" Antoine ! Antoine ! " called the girl.

He was untying the bundle of woman's clothes, and trying to make out what they were by holding them up in the moonlight. Suddenly he dropped them with an exclamation of surprise.

" Oh, my good ! " he said.

" Antoine ! Antoine ! Antoine, méchant," she called.

" Sh, sh ! Not such a row ! " he answered.

" Let down the rope ; I'm coming up," she said.

" You can't get up," he answered.

" You'll help pull me up—quick, the rope ! "

" My hands are bleeding."

" Bûzard—black bûzard ! " she cried angrily. " You lied to me ! "

"I'll let down your clothes to you," he said.

"If you don't let down the rope, I'll climb up without it; and if I fall and break my neck, it'll be your fault. Quick, for I'm going to start!"

This frightened him. He tied the ropes still more firmly together, made a loop, and let the coil drop slowly. The loop fell into Minois's hands.

"Don't start yet," he called down. "I'll pull when it's all ready. He fell back from the edge to a place in the grass where, tying the rope round his body, he could seat himself and brace his feet against a ledge of rock. Then he pulled on the rope.

Minois began climbing, and Antoine pulled steadily. Twice he felt the rope suddenly jerk when she lost her footing, but still it came in steadily, and he used a nose of rock as a sort of winch. He knew when she was more than one-third of the way up by the greater weight upon the rope, by the more frequent jerking when she slipped. Yet this was no labour and monstrous struggle such as Antoine's climbing—this was the scaling of a conquered wall by the legions of the victorious.

She was nearly two-thirds of the way up when a cannon-shot boomed out over the water, frightening again the vast convoy of birds which shrieked and honked till the air was a maëlstrom of cries. Then came another cannon-shot.

Antoine's desertion was discovered.

Upon the other side of the Rock, boats were putting out towards the shore. Antoine knew perfectly each movement as well as if he were watching them. The fight was begun between a single fisherman and a fleet of French warships.

His strength, however, could not last much longer. Every muscle of his body had been strained and tortured, and even this easier task tried him beyond endurance. His legs stiffened against the ledge of the rock, the tension on his arms made them numb—he wondered how near she was to the top. Suddenly there was a pause, then a heavy jerk. Love of God! The rope was shooting through his fingers, his legs were giving way. He gathered himself together, and then with teeth, hands, and body rigid with enormous effort, he pulled and pulled. He could not see. A mist swam before his eyes. Everything grew black, but he pulled on and on!

He never knew just when she reached the top. But when the mist cleared away from his eyes, she was bending over him, putting rum to his lips as he sat just where he had stiffened with effort.

"What a cat I was!" she said. "What a wild cat I was to make you haul me up! I didn't know it was so bad. It was bad for me with the rope round me—it must have been awful for you, my poor scarecrow Antoine!"

Scarecrow indeed he looked. His clothes were nearly gone, his hair was tossed and matted, his eyes were bloodshot, his huge hands were like pieces of raw meat, his feet were covered with blood.

"My poor scarecrow!" she said, and she tenderly wiped the blood from his face where his hands had touched them. Meanwhile, bugle calls and cries of command came up to them, and in the first light of morning they could see the Frenchmen and the Carnavals hurrying to and fro.

When day came clear and bright, it was known that Minois as well as Antoine had vanished. Ol' man Carnaval was in as great a rage as the French Admiral, who was as keen to hunt down one Jersey-Englishman as he had ever been to attack an English fleet—more so perhaps.

Meanwhile, the birds kept up a wild turmoil and shrieking. Never before had anyone heard them so clamorous. More than once ol' man Carnaval had looked at Percé Rock curiously, but whenever the thought of it as a refuge occurred to him he put it away. No, it was impossible. No human being since the world began had ever stood on that mysterious, lonely and impregnable place, sacred to the birds and the invisible dwellers of the air.

Yet what was that? His heart thumped under his coat. There were two people on the lofty island wall—a man and a woman. He caught the arm of a French officer near him: "Look, look!" he said. The officer raised his glass and looked.

"It's the gunner!" he cried, and handed the glass to the old man.

"It's my Minois!" said Carnaval, after a moment, in a hoarse voice. "But it's not possible. It's not possible!" he added. "Nobody was ever there. My God! Look at it! Look at it!"

It was a picture, indeed. A man and a woman were outlined against the clear air, putting up a tent as calmly as if it were on a lawn, thousands of birds wheeling over their heads with querulous, fantastic cries.

A few moments later, ol' man Carnaval was being rowed swiftly to the French flagship, where the Admiral himself was swearing viciously as he looked through his telescope. He had recognised the gunner.

He had prepared to bombard the fishing-post and wipe it out of existence if Carnaval did not produce Antoine. Well, here was Antoine duly produced and insultingly setting up a tent on this sheer rock, " with some snippet of the devil," said the Admiral, and defying a whole French fleet! He would set his gunners to work. If he had as good a marksman as Antoine himself, the deserter should drop at the first shot— " death and the devil take his impudent face ! "

He was just about to give the order, when Carnaval was brought to him. The old man's story amazed him beyond measure.

" It is no man then ! " said the Admiral, when Carnaval had done and an officer had added that all sides of the rock presented an almost perpendicular face. " He must be a damned fly to do it ! And the girl—sacré moi !—he drew her up after him ! I'll have him down out of that, though, or throw up my flag," he added and, turning fiercely, gave his orders.

¶

FOR hours the French ships bombarded the lonely rock from the north. The white tent was carried away, but the cannon-balls flew over or merely battered the solid rock, the shells were thrown beyond, and no harm was done. But now and again the figure of Antoine appeared, and a half-dozen times he took aim coolly with his musket at the French soldiers on the shore. Twice his shots took effect ; one man was wounded and one killed. Then whole companies of marines returned a musketry fire at him, to no purpose. At his ease he hid himself in the long grass at the edge of the cliff and picked off two more men.

Here was a ridiculous thing—one man and a slip of a girl fighting and defying a whole squadron ! The smoke of battle covered miles of the great gulf. Even the sea birds shrieked in ridicule.

This went on for three days at intervals. With a fine chagrin the Admiral and his fleet saw a bright camp fire lighted on the Rock, and knew that Antoine and the girl were cooking their meals in peace. A flag-staff, too, was set up, and a red petticoat waved defiantly in the breeze. At last the Admiral, who had watched the business from the deck of the *Invincible*, burst out laughing at the absurd humour of the situation. He sent for ol' man Carnaval.

" I've had enough," said he. " How long can he last up there ? "

" He will have birds' eggs in plenty ; there's wild berries, too, besides ground rats and all them. If I know my girl, too, there's rations gone aloft ! " and he shook his head ruefully.

" They're not married, either ! " said the Admiral maliciously.

The old man shook his head again sadly.

" A fleet of the French Republic blushes for such shamelessness ! " said the Admiral, with mock indignation on his red face and a twinkle of the eye. " Come, I've had enough ! "

He gave orders to stop firing. When the roar of cannon had ceased, he said :

" Sacré moi ! There never was a wilder jest, and I'll not spoil the joke. He has us on his toasting-fork. I shall give him the honour of a flag of truce, and he must come down. The scoundrel shall marry your daughter, fisherman, or we'll know the reason why." He was a fat, coarse, high-living admiral, and his sensual lower lip shook with laughter.

And so it was that a French fleet sent a flag of truce to the foot of Percé Rock, and a French officer, calling up, gave the word of honour of his Admiral that Antoine should suffer nothing at the hands of a court-martial and that he should be treated as a prisoner of war.

" As a prisoner of war ! " quoth Antoine —that meant that he was to be treated like an English belligerent and not like a French deserter. He hemmed and hawed, and backed and filled, and made a function of the business, and insisted on this as a condition and that as a concession, but at last he accepted the terms, though Minois stormed and said that she would stay in spite of all. At last she would go only on condition that she also should be treated as a prisoner in Antoine's company.

Antoine was easily able to make these terms, and she was lowered by the rope. Antoine then fastened the rope-end to one point of rock and then to another, and himself descended, and was conducted with Minois to the Admiral with all the honours of war.

There was no court-martial. After Antoine had told the tale of the ascent at the Admiral's command, all the officers standing near, his fate was pronounced. The Admiral said:

"No one but an Englishman would be fool enough to attempt such a thing, and no one but a fool could have been lucky enough to succeed. You have proved, gunner, that you are no Frenchman."

"Then I am no deserter, Excellency," said Antoine.

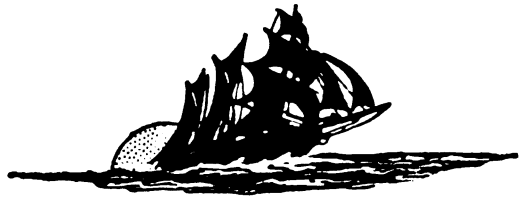
"You are a fool; but even a fool can get a woman to follow him, and so this fly-away followed you, gunner. But we'll have no more lewdness 'twixt heaven and earth, and——"

Minois flew at the Admiral as though to scratch his eyes out, but Antoine held her back.

"And you are condemned, gunner," continued the Admiral dryly, "to marry the maid before sundown or be carried out to sea a prisoner of war."

So saying, he laughed silently and bade them begone to the wedding.

And it was done as the Admiral commanded, and the fishing-post of Percé was saved to England; and Antoine and Minois, they sailed the sea in the *Charming Nancy* for many a year.



THE FOUNTAIN AND THE NIGHTINGALE

The Nightingale:

Who art thou alone that weepest,
Weepest tears all diamond-bright—
Diamond-bright where dark is deepest,
Deepest in the heart of night?
Night still echoes shreds of laughter—
Laughter where the branches shake;
Shake before me, beckon after . . .
After what doth thy heart break?

The Fountain:

Who art thou bemused that singest?
Singest thou for joy or pain?
Pain of love to which thou clingest—
Clingest surely? Or in vain?

The Nightingale:

Vain thy tears . . .

The Fountain:

And vain, oh minstrel,
Minstrelsy that wounds the sky—
Skies heed not . . .

The Nightingale:

Bright grief, who art thou?

The Fountain:

Who art thou, dark ecstasy?

P. F. C.

Back to the Bush

A humorist's view of the adventurous life

By STEPHEN LEACOCK

I HAVE a friend called Billy, who has the Bush Mania. By trade he is a doctor, but I do not think that he needs to sleep out of doors. In ordinary things his mind appears sound. Over the tops of his gold-rimmed spectacles, as he bends forward to speak to you, there gleams nothing but amiability and kindliness. Like all the rest of us he is, or was until he forgot it all, an extremely well-educated man.

I am aware of no criminal strain in his blood. Yet Billy is in reality hopelessly unbalanced. He has the Mania of the Open Woods.

Worse than that, he is haunted with the desire to drag his friends with him into the depths of the Bush.

Whenever we meet he starts to talk about it.

Not long ago I met him in the club.

"I wish," he said, "you'd let me take you clear away up the Gatineau."

"Yes, I wish I would, I don't think," I murmured to myself, but I humoured him and said:

"How do we go, Billy, in a motor-car or by train?"

"No, we paddle."

"And is it up-stream all the way?"

"Oh, yes," Billy said enthusiastically.

"And how many days do we paddle all day to get up?"

"Six."

"Couldn't we do it in less?"

"Yes," Billy answered, feeling that I was entering into the spirit of the thing, "if we start each morning just before daylight and paddle hard till moonlight, we could do it in five days and a half."

"Glorious! and are there portages?"

"Lots of them."

"And at each of these do I carry two hundred pounds of stuff up a hill on my back?"

"Yes."

"And will there be a guide, a genuine, dirty-looking Indian guide?"

"Yes."

"And can I sleep next to him?"

"Oh, yes, if you want to."

"And when we get to the top, what is there?"

"Well, we go over the height of land."

"Oh, we do, do we? And is the height of land all rock and about three hundred yards uphill? And do I carry a barrel of flour up it? And does it roll down and crush me on the other side? Look here, Billy, this trip is a great thing, but it is too luxurious for me. If you will have me paddled up the river in a large iron canoe with an awning, carried over the portages in a sedan-chair, taken across the height of land in a palanquin or a howdah, and lowered down the other side in a derrick, I'll go. Short of that, the thing would be too fattening."

Billy was discouraged and left me. But he has since returned repeatedly to the attack.

He offers to take me to the head-waters of the Batiscan. I am content at the foot.

He wants us to go to the sources of the Attahwapiscat. I don't.

He says I ought to see the grand chutes of the Kewakasis. Why should I?

I have made Billy a counter-proposition that we strike through the Adirondacks (in the train) to New York, from there portage to Atlantic City, then to Washington, carrying our own grub (in the dining-car), camp there a few days (at the Willard), and then back, I to return by train and Billy on foot with the outfit.

The thing is still unsettled.

Billy, of course, is only one of thousands that have got this mania. And the autumn is the time when it rages at its worst.

Every day there move northward trains, packed full of lawyers, bankers, and brokers, headed for the bush. They are dressed up to look like pirates. They wear slouch hats, flannel shirts, and leather breeches with belts. They could afford much better

clothes than these, but they won't use them. I don't know where they get these clothes. I think the railroad lends them out. They have guns between their knees and big knives at their hips. They smoke the worst tobacco they can find, and they carry ten gallons of alcohol per man in the baggage car.

In the intervals of telling lies to one another they read the railroad pamphlets about hunting. This kind of literature is deliberately and fiendishly contrived to infuriate their mania. I know all about these pamphlets because I write them. I once, for instance, wrote up, from imagination, a little place called Dog Lake at the end of a branch line. The place had failed as a settlement, and the railroad had decided to turn it into a hunting resort. I did the turning. I think I did it rather well, rechristening the lake and stocking the place with suitable varieties of game. The pamphlet ran like this.

"The limpid waters of Lake Owatawetness (the name, according to the old Indian legends of the place, signifies, The Mirror of the Almighty) abound with every known variety of fish. Near to its surface, so close that the angler may reach out his hand and stroke them, schools of pike, pickerel, mackerel, doggerel, and chickerel jostle one another in the water. They rise instantaneously to the bait and swim gratefully ashore holding it in their mouths. In the middle depth of the waters of the lake, the sardine, the lobster, the kippered herring, the anchovy and other tinned varieties of fish disport themselves with evident gratification, while even lower in the pellucid depths the dog-fish, the hog-fish, the log-fish, and the sword-fish whirl about in never-ending circles.

"Nor is Lake Owatawetness merely an Angler's Paradise. Vast forests of primeval pine slope to the very shores of the lake, to which descend great droves of bears—brown, green, and bear-coloured—while as the shades of evening fall, the air is loud with the lowing of moose, cariboo, antelope, cantelope, musk-oxes, musk-rats, and other graminivorous mammalia of the forest. These enormous quadrumana generally move off about 10-30 p.m., from which hour until 11-45 p.m. the whole shore is reserved for bison and buffalo.

"After midnight hunters who so desire it can be chased through the woods, for any distance and at any speed they select, by jaguars, panthers, cougars, tigers, and jackals whose ferocity is reputed to be such that they will tear the breeches of a man with their teeth in their eagerness to sink their fangs in his palpitating flesh. Hunters, attention! Do not miss such attractions as these!"

I have seen men—quiet, reputable, well-shaved men—reading that pamphlet of mine in the rotundas of hotels, with their eyes blazing with excitement. I think it is the jaguar attraction that hits them the hardest, because I notice them rub themselves sympathetically with their hands while they read.

Of course, you can imagine the effect of this sort of literature on the brains of men fresh from their offices, and dressed out as pirates.

They just go crazy and stay crazy.

Just watch them when they get into the bush.

Notice that well-to-do stockbroker crawling about on his stomach in the underbrush, with his spectacles shining like gig-lamps. What is he doing? He is after a cariboo that isn't there. He is "stalking" it. With his stomach. Of course, away down in his heart he knows that the cariboo isn't there and never was; but that man read my pamphlet and went crazy. He can't help it: he's *got* to stalk something. Mark him as he crawls along; see him crawl through a thimbleberry bush (very quietly so that the cariboo won't hear the noise of the prickles going into him), then through a bee's nest, gently and slowly, so that the cariboo will not take fright when the bees are stinging him. Sheer woodcraft! Yes, mark him. Mark him any way you like. Go up behind him and paint a blue cross on the seat of his pants as he crawls. He'll never notice. He thinks he's a hunting dog. Yet this is the man who laughs at his little son of ten for crawling round under the dining-room table with a mat over his shoulders, and pretending to be a bear.

Now see these other men in camp.

Someone has told them—I think I first started the idea in my pamphlet—that the thing is to sleep on a pile of hemlock branches. I think I told them to listen to the wind sowing (you know the word I mean), sowing and crooning in the giant pines. So there they are upside-down, doubled up on a couch of green spikes that would have killed St. Sebastian. They

stare up at the sky with blood-shot, restless eyes, waiting for the crooning to begin. And there isn't a sow in sight.

Here is another man, ragged and with a six-day's growth of beard, frying a piece of bacon on a stick over a little fire. Now what does he think he is ? The *chef* of the Waldorf Astoria ? Yes, he does, and what's more he thinks that that miserable bit of bacon, cut with a tobacco knife from a chunk of meat that lay six days in the rain, is fit to eat. What's more, he'll eat it. So will the rest. They're all crazy together.

There's another man, the Lord help him, who thinks he has the "knack" of being a carpenter. He is hammering up shelves to a tree. Till the shelves fall down he thinks he is a wizard. Yet this is the same man who swore at his wife for asking him to put up a shelf in the back kitchen. "How the blazes," he asked, "could he nail the damn thing up ? Did she think he was a plumber ? "

After all, never mind.

Provided they are happy up there, let them stay.

Personally, I wouldn't mind if they didn't come back and lie about it. They get back to the city dead fagged for want of sleep, sogged with alcohol, bitten brown by the bush-flies, trampled on by the moose and chased through the brush by bears and skunks—and they have the nerve to say that they like it.

Sometimes I think they do.

Men are only animals anyway. They like to get out into the woods and growl round at night and feel something bite them.

Only why haven't they the imagination to be able to do the same thing with less fuss ? Why not take their coats and collars off in the office and crawl round on the floor and growl at one another.

It would be just as good.

Life and its Passions

THE passions are the only orators which always persuade. LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

CONSCIENCE is the voice of the soul ; passions are the voice of the body. Is it astonishing that these two languages are often contradictory ? ROUSSEAU.

PASSION is universal humanity. Without it religion, history, romance, art, would be useless. BALZAC.

IS the Devil to have all the passions as well as all the good tunes ? G. B. SHAW.

HE who has no passions has no principle, nor motive to act. HELVETIUS.

PASSION makes the best observations and the sorriest conclusions. JEAN PAUL.

A SINGLE spark of occasion discharges the child of passion into a thousand crackers of desire. LAVATER.

HE is happy who is forsaken by his passions. HITOPADESA.

THE passions may be likened to blood horses, that need training and the curb only to enable them, when they carry, to achieve most glorious triumphs. SIMMS.

The Littlest Boy

Feminine diplomacy—in a very good cause

By T. W. HANSHEW

"THIS is it, I think, sir," said the cabman, pulling up before the last house on the left.

Lantier looked at the address embossed in dull blue on the heading of the letter, compared it with the number on the door, and rose.

"Yes, this is it," he agreed, and got out, stopping a moment to stamp out the cramped sensation in his legs before going in, and taking a mental tally of his surroundings as he did so.

"Does herself pretty well," he mused, taking in the rather select neighbourhood, the detached houses with the sweep of smooth shaven lawn before each, and the blaze of flowers in the window boxes of the last one on the left. "Rather a change, this, from the old 'digs' and the gloom and grime of Grub Street. But that was to be expected, of course. Trust her—trust any member of her interesting sex—to see that she gets all the honey the hive of life contains before the 'smoking out' season comes round. The fellow who first likened a woman to a butterfly must have been a very bad judge of hornets! Wonder if she's changed much? Wonder how she'll receive me? Well, here goes."

He faced about suddenly and walked up to the door, rather surprised and not a little annoyed with himself to discover when he rang that his heart had developed a sudden tendency to thump thick and fast for a second, then skip a beat and thump again, and that there was just the suggestion of a shake in his hands as he began to unfasten his gloves.

But, of course, that meant nothing. No weakening of the fibre, no sentimental "echoes," no sudden "twanging of muted strings," or any tommy rot of that sort; he'd put all that idiotic nonsense behind him and lived it down ages ago. He'd been smoking a bit too much to-day—that was the cause of it; and if——

The door swung inward and a mild-mannered serving maid confronted him.

"Does Mrs. John Lantier live here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thanks. Just say I have arrived, please."

The door swung wider open, the maid ushered him into a little jewel box of a drawing-toom, all white lacquer and frosted silver and soft tones of faint sea-green, and thoughtfully arranged the curtains so that the light didn't glare.

"What name shall I say, if you please, sir?"

"Mr. Lantier.'

"Sir!"

"Mr. John Lantier," supplemented the owner of the name, with marked emphasis on the "John"; and allowing himself to enter into this amount of detail because he perceived clearly that the dumbfounded maid had never hitherto suspected that her mistress was possessed of so unimportant an appendage as a living husband. And for some inexplicable reason the knowledge awoke a dim sense of resentment and irritation—a queer something that was half anger and half disappointment, and which impelled him to kick savagely at an inviting Liberty tuffet as the maid walked away.

"Cut me out of the scheme of things entirely—eh?" he cogitated, bestowing a bitter laugh and a nod of the head at the other fellow who laughed and nodded back at him from the mirror in the corner—a big, handsome, upstanding fellow of five-and-thirty, well set up, well groomed, with an orchid in his buttonhole and a look of prosperity about him. "Cut me clean out of it. Zip!—like that. Of course, I didn't expect her to run about with a label on her back advertising our marriage failure and the rock we split upon, but—well, she might, at least, have let people know that I'm still living."

Somehow, that fact hurt—he didn't know why, but it did. It was true that he, for his part, hadn't been at the pains of mentioning her existence to those of his friends who did not already know of his early

marriage; but—well, that was different. Good Heaven above! nobody expected a man to go about talking of his domestic affairs. Then, too, he lived at his club for the most part, now that Jane and his mother were dead, and men don't discuss home conditions at clubs. Men don't talk babies, and matrimony, and household worries the way women do; and—there you are!

Besides, how could a man with half a grain of pride in his soul stand up and confess to other men that his wife—the mother of his child, a grown woman with two such anchors as motherhood and wifehood to maintain her "balance" and hold her safely moored in the harbour of Home—had thrown him over, cut loose from him, sailed away from him for such a paltry mess of pottage as dances and dresses, and with no greater excuse to offer than that the life she had lived with him was unsatisfying and dull?

Dull! Think of it—married, settled, with a home, a husband and a child to occupy her thoughts. And she found it *dull!* Good Heaven above! What did women want in the world, if they couldn't be satisfied with all that the world had to give them?

And the first woman was supposed to have been made of a rib taken from the man's body! Well, if Eve was satisfied with *one* rib, her descendants were not so moderate. There were twenty-three others, and they were howling for what was left of them.

Ah, well! he might have known how it would end. His mother had warned him, his sister Jane had warned him. "A shallow, empty-headed doll! Brought up like a heathen, living an unwholesome, irresponsible hand-to-mouth sort of life in her wretched father's wretched studio, with a *crew* of picture-daubing, pipe-smoking, irreligious Bohemians shrieking and laughing about the place from morning to night. And you with such a brilliant career before you! If you do it, you'll regret it to your dying day."

Yes, he had had his warning, right enough. But it didn't count—nothing ever does, but possession, when one is young and a fool and ears over head in love. And he *was* in love in those days—idiotically, hopelessly, mawkishly; with an amount of besotted bliss that, spread out thin, would have lasted a level-headed individual for a whole lifetime. And the worst of it was that she did seem worth it at that time. By George, you know she *was* a pretty little witch—the jolliest and the dearest little witch in all the world, in those days; and she had such a way of cutting a clean, smooth path down into a fellow's heart and making him feel that he was the biggest gun in the whole arsenal of life just to have her smile on him.

Oh, well! He'd got over all that now. It was business, not sentiment, that was accountable for his being here to-day.

He took the letter out of his pocket and looked at it again, skimming over the introductory lines and coming down to the one important paragraph of the whole: "And I think, don't you, that in so important a matter as choosing a proper school for him, his father ought, in common fairness if nothing more, to have a word to say in the matter? So, if he cares to call on Thursday afternoon to discuss the subject, please say that I will make a point of being in to receive him. Yours sincerely, Katharine Lantier." With the same funny little "Dutch twist" to the "K" as in those days of long ago.

Ah, dear! how well he remembered it all! The same little cramped "hand," the same backward slant to the irregular letters, the same tendency to run down hill at the end of the line, as in those scrawled notes that used to come to him to thank him for his flowers or "the perfectly delicious time you gave Dad and me on the river yesterday," and which usually ended "Please excuse blots and haste. Dad's calling for me, and I've got ink all over everything."

Forgive the blots? Why, he used to kiss them, because he knew that they had trickled from her fingers!

"Faugh! What an idiot! What an ass! If only some beneficent Providence would put a man into a cataleptic state between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, what a boon it would be to the universe!"

"More than a boon: an absolute blessing—to women!"

He faced round suddenly as the voice sounded, unaware until then that he had put his thoughts into actual words, or that anybody was coming, much less had come; and across the narrow width of the room his eyes met hers for the first time in years.

She was standing in the doorway and looking at him—so little changed outwardly, so like to what she was in those

old times that it seemed but yesterday. And the shock of the thing had come upon him so abruptly, so unexpectedly, and found him so unprepared, that all his wits went flying like the down of a wind-struck thistle.

"Oh—er—hullo, Kit! Is that you? How are you?" he blurted out with a silly, confused laugh; and before he knew it, was across the room and had her hand in his. "Well, I'm here, you see."

A little ripple of the old well-remembered laugh came to him, and cut into him, like the pricking of a thorn on a dead rose. He pulled himself together with a sudden jerk of remembrance and looked up, startled, his lips indrawn and a streak of colour across his cheeks and nose.

"I beg your pardon!" he rapped out stiffly. "I lost my balance for a moment and forgot."

"Anything new in that?" she said serenely. "Would you mind if I were to mention the fact that you are crushing my rings into my fingers, and it hurts somewhat? Thank you so much! Lovely afternoon, isn't it? Won't you sit down, Snooks? You don't look comfortable, standing here and fiddling with your watchchain like that."

Snooks! The thin ice of his resumed dignity cracked and split clean through before the lance of the old pet name, and he laughed a silly, sheepish, vacuous little laugh as he sat down on the nearest chair.

"You're looking extremely well," he said, inanely. "Have any more of the old-time headaches now?"

"No; not one."

"That's good. I—er—suppose you know that Jane's dead?"

"Yes, thank you," she answered, as she closed the door and crossed the room to the fireplace and stood with one arm resting on the mantelpiece. "I read the interesting fact; but as I am not a hypocrite, I didn't put on mourning. But, *please!* We won't talk about Jane Lantier, John. It is a subject I can't trust myself to speak upon. Death does not always sanctify."

"Why not? Mortal errors end when immortality begins. One should always speak well of the dead."

"If that is to be accepted as a fixed rule," she flung back at him, "we shall have to start whitewashing Judas Iscariot at once and cease to teach history in our schools. I have yet to hear of anyone who is anxious to canonise Nero or beg a halo for Lucretia Borgia."

"Oh, come, I say! That's piffle!" he retorted, with a short, derisive laugh. "That's carrying an argument to a ridiculous extreme."

"It usually is when it presumes to contradict, and kicks the crutches from under any of our lame illusions."

"And men's wives," he threw back at her, "are pretty good hands at that sort of thing, kicking over illusions."

"They have to be—they get so much practice with their own. But, *please!*" She gave her shoulders a twitch and threw back her head and drummed with her fingers on the mantelshelf. "Is it necessary to go on like this? We didn't meet, did we, simply to talk fireworks?—like the people in a Dolly Dialogue!"

"Well, you began it—I didn't!"

She gave her head a twitching, birdlike movement that seemed to be responsible for the shaky little laugh that accompanied it—as though the action had rattled it out.

"Oh, yes; of course. *I* began it!" she agreed, sarcastically. "That is one of the things one has to admire in a man—his beautiful consistency, his splendid loyalty to the tenets of his fathers. 'Lord, it was the woman!'" She laughed again, and swung round, laying the other arm, too, along the shelf, and stood there, like a human crucifix, looking down at him with eyes of dim reproach. "Anything else that *I* began?"

"Pretty nearly everything—for *me!*" he made reply, his voice and his eyes sinking. "Every sorrow, every joy. I didn't know what it was to live until I met you. I didn't know what it was to grieve—until—I *knew* you. Yes; you began everything, and—you ended everything—for *me!*"

¶

HE got up suddenly and walked over to the window, and stood there—with his back to her—looking silently down into the quiet street and turning over the loose coins in his trousers pockets so that they made a little jingling sound. And, somehow, she hadn't the heart or the courage to speak.

"Let's drop it and talk about something else," he said, facing round abruptly. "What about the boy? Any choice yourself regarding the school?"

" No. That usually rests with the father, doesn't it—with a boy ? "

" Perhaps it does—I don't know. I haven't any experience. The other little mite was a girl, you know."

Her eyes closed suddenly and her face went white as ivory.

" Don't ! " she said in a wrung voice. " There are some things too sacred, too holy ! I can't think of it even yet."

His head sank until his chin touched his chest.

" I'm sorry, Kit ! " he said, contritely. " It's just my blundering way. I wouldn't have done it for the world if I had thought ! "

" I know," she answered ; " but that's where all our troubles began ; you never did stop to think. There ! it's over. What was it you were asking ? About the —er—boy's school ? No ; I haven't any choice."

Something in the air of indifference with which she alluded to the child, contrasting strongly, as it did, with her anguish at the bare mention of that other child—gone from them in the very month that it had been given—struck Lantier as being almost callous, and it both shocked and amazed him.

" ' The boy ' ! " he repeated. " That's a curious way for his mother to allude to him, isn't it ? What's his name ? "

A faint dash of colour flickered into her face, and was gone again, in a winking.

" His name ?—Oh—er—John."

" You don't seem to be very certain of it," said Lantier, noting that brief moment of hesitation. " If I didn't know better ——Poor little duffer ! Have him in and let me take a look at him. I've never seen him, you know. You didn't even tell me that he was expected until—after—you had —left me ! "

Her chest heaved, her neck stiffened, the widespread hands shut suddenly, then opened, and shut again, tensely.

" And when I *did* tell you you never came after me ! " she said, with something in her voice that cut down into the very soul of him. " That's what hurt me the most of all. You let me go ! You never came after me ! You never made one solitary effort to *force* me to come back ! "

His jaws clamped together and a sudden rush of colour got up into his face.

" Did you think I would ? Did you think I *could*—after the manner in which you left me ? " he snapped. " Chucking me over for frocks and frivolities—for empty fripperies that I couldn't afford to give you ! Cutting loose from me as though I were a dog, and leaving me on the very day your father's life insurance money was paid over to you. I had nothing when I married you : I had nothing when you left me. What sort of a man did you take me to be if you thought I'd go after you when you had come into money ? "

" Do you think, if you had done so, I should have believed it was because of that ? "

" Why shouldn't I ? A woman who could leave her husband for the simple sake of fal-lals and fripperies——"

" I did not leave you because of that—I did not ! " she protested, indignantly. " You have no right to say—no right even to think—it was for that."

" What else could I think ? " he answered bitterly. " You can't go behind the evidence : tears and complainings day in and day out ; a restless, dissatisfied, peevish woman rebelling against Fate, and ever and always the one unchanging cry : ' Take me somewhere ! Let us dress and go out —to a dance—to a theatre—anything to get out of this ! ' Always *that*—until, sometimes, I used to wonder if you had either heart or conscience, to keep hectoring me so, and if you really *could* be the same girl I fell in love with."

" Oh, yes ; I was the same girl—in heart, in soul, in mind, in everything ! " she said, with a hollow sort of laugh and a gesture of hopeless resignation. " That's where the whole difficulty lay—where most of the difficulties of women and wives do lie. I was the same girl, but—you didn't seem to remember that ! After the manner of men, you seemed to think that, no matter where your duties began, they ended with a wedding ring, and that the woman who gave herself to you ought to be content to bury the lover under the cold monument of the husband ! "

" I don't see the point of your argument," he made reply. " You seem to imply that because I married you I thought less of you. That's not the truth. I married you because I loved you, but I never loved you more than on the day I brought you home, a wife, after the honeymoon. Whatever changes our marriage brought about, they were changes in you, not in me. I never could understand what caused them."

" Couldn't you ? " She shrugged her

shoulders despairingly and made a sound that was laughter and yet had a note of mirth in it. "Did you ever stand and watch a bird swinging on a bough and shrilling away from sheer excess of joy? —singing and singing for no apparent reason to the sky, the flowers, the sunshine —anything and everything—in the sheer bliss of simply living. Catch it, jam it into a cage, hang it up in a dark room, and see how long it will have the heart to go on singing. Well, *I* was a bird on a bough. The cage and the dark room silenced me!"

A faint colour came into his face; he shifted uneasily and looked down.

"I don't think it's fair to blame me for that," he said, half resentfully. "It wasn't my fault; I did the best I could."

"It was a poor 'best,' Snooks."

"Could I help that? If it were to-day it would be different. I've succeeded now and am worth something. But in those days—no; it's not fair, Kit! I was a poor man when I married you, and you knew it. I couldn't go on buying you flowers and giving you presents and all those things that a fellow *has* to do when he's courting a girl. It had been a strain to do it even then—when I had only myself to support—but when there were *two* of us to feed and clothe on my limited income—I simply could not do it."

"I didn't want you to do it. I didn't want presents — and flowers — and dresses and things that you couldn't afford," she said simply. "What I wanted was something you can't buy with money!"

He looked up sharply and met her eyes. And the colour drained out of his face and flushed up again and drained once more, and his throat moved as though he had difficulty in swallowing something.

"A woman does not marry a man simply for a home, Snooks," she went on, looking up into his eyes with a curious sort of intentness. "She wants something more than just a roof to shelter her, a bed to sleep in and three good meals a day. She does not want to be simply a lodger in her husband's house. She wants to hold the key that locks her in his heart, and she is such an illogical creature that even when it is in her possession she likes him to tell her occasionally that she's got it! No; I didn't want presents, Snooks. I didn't want dresses—I only wanted that key! It wasn't because you were poor that I was restless and dissatisfied. I could have lived in a hut with you and been happy, but not in a tomb!"

"It's hardly fair to call it that," he said in reply. "It's hardly fair to blame me because you couldn't get along with my people. I suppose it *would* have been better if we had waited until we were able to start with a home of our own, but—you'd grown to mean so much to me—I needed you so badly—that—I didn't seem able to get along without you. And, besides—you were willing."

"Yes, I was willing!" she agreed, with a sigh. "That's the worst of it. It doesn't make the stab hurt the less to know that you sharpened the sword with your own hands. I loved you so much; I was so sure that we could get along anywhere, anyhow; that any place in the world would seem a Heaven so that you were there and we two were together. Ah, well, I paid for my folly as many another woman has done before me. I tell you, John, that it is the greatest mistake in the world for a man to take his wife home to live with his people, or for a woman to take her husband home to live with hers. I don't care if they are angels, sooner or later trouble will come of it. The marriage ring should be the circle that surrounds a new beginning; the altar should be the foundation stone of a new, undeveloped, untrodden, untried structure, not a mere wing grafted on to the walls of an old one."

She came a step nearer and stood before him with palms turned outwards.

"A song is sweeter than a sigh, John," she said. "Experiences *bought* are better than experiences *told*. A bride doesn't want to begin life walking in a garden that's been clipped, and rolled, and gravelled, and planted for her by another woman, no matter how dear that other woman may be. She doesn't want pruned hedges and carefully trimmed paths. She wants to go out with her husband into the wilderness of the unknown and to hear him laugh and sing as they swing the axes together and cut a *new* one for themselves! And if, sometimes, the axes slip—and the blades strike false—and the path goes astray, she's such an illogical creature, it's an actual *joy* to cut her way back to the line and set up a little white stone, and say, 'Here's where we erred. Here's where we went wrong, dear. We mustn't take this turning again!' That's where you and I made our mistake, John. We didn't go into the wilderness—

we went into the clipped garden and the unnecessary wing!"

Lantier made no response, but as though some new and startling thing had suddenly taken shape in his mind he looked at her sharply.

"It would have been trying enough if I had been welcome," she went on, after a pause; "but—I wasn't! Everything I did was wrong. Everything I wanted was low-bred and vulgar. Everything I said was smiled upon pityingly or greeted with a silent stare of cold contempt. I had even offended by existing, I learned in time. You might have married money but for me; you might have risen to *any* height, if you hadn't hung a millstone round your neck! Oh, I did full penance in that house for all my sins, John—and they meant that I should. I likened it, a moment ago, to a tomb; but a torture chamber would be nearer the truth. I only wanted to have the hours go that you were forced to be away from me. I was so lonely, so heartsick, so weary of it all."

Again his eyes lifted to hers with that sharp, startled look of inquiry and surprise, and again they fell.

"I didn't think you cared so much," he said in a hushed voice. "I suppose it was lonely for you, but—I didn't think of it then. I didn't have time to think of anything but—making my way. And that was as much for your sake as for my own."

"I always understood that, John," she made reply. "But, as I have told you already, a woman is an illogical creature. She's proud of a man if he succeeds, but she doesn't love him any the less if he fails; and in those days I would gladly have put off prosperity for another year so that I might have had you with me for a single hour. And I used to count the very minutes for you to come home. Oh, *how* I used to count them!—especially when I had had an extra trying day. But it was always the same—always the same! You were too tired and fagged out after the day's work to go anywhere, too weary to talk."

A red stain came slowly up over his face, deepening as it grew.

"You surely couldn't blame me for that, Kit," he said, half resentfully. "A man isn't cast iron. He can't stand everything and *never* knuckle under. I'd been working like a dog the whole day long. You oughtn't to blame me for a thing I couldn't help."

"I'm not 'blaming you for it,' John—I'm merely stating facts. If I had had a home of my own to occupy my thoughts during the day; if I might have prepared some little surprise for you—cooked some little thing that I knew you liked, it would have made all the difference in the world. But in that house I might not move a picture nor alter the position of a chair. It was the wilderness I wanted—the wilderness, and the axes; and when, at last, there came a chance of having them, I nearly went insane with joy. That was—when—my baby came!"

¶

HER voice snapped and went off into silence. Lantier shifted uneasily and looked up—and looked down again quickly and swallowed something, and for a moment or two that was the only sound.

"I knew that the house wouldn't be large enough to accommodate all of us after that," she resumed, presently. "There had been babies—oh, yes, millions and millions of them—but never one that meant so much to its mother as mine; never a baby so dear, so welcome, so truly a gift straight from the hand of God as mine was going to be. And when she came—and I held her little head upon my breast—and hugged her wee little body up close to me—and looked into Heaven through the gateway of her precious little eyes—oh, John!"

"Don't!" he struck in, a shake in his voice, the clutch of something at his throat, and his chest moving with short, sharp jerks. "I can't bear to see you do it. It takes the life out of me."

"I can't help it," she answered forlornly, through a rain of tears. "I can't get over it—I never will. Oh, John! she was our—our own little baby girl."

"Yes, I know," he said, taking his lower lip between his thumb and forefinger and squeezing it hard. "But, please, Kit, don't—there's a dear. It takes the heart out of me to see you do it; and—— Can't you find your handkerchief? Here—take mine."

He walked round to where she stood, and put the square of linen in her hand.

And somehow, as he stood close to her again, like this, with all the strength smitten out of her and the woe of wrung motherhood in her face and eyes—something that had been sleeping for a long, long time

woke up and—cried! And he put his hand over *her* hand and squeezed it hard, not saying one word, not making one sound.

Then, when he found that she did not try to pluck it away, only stood there, weak and drooping, a woman forlorn, in the hour of woman's deepest need—he put the other arm round her and pulled her down upon his breast and held her fast, with all his strength.

"Cry it out here, then," he said, in a choked voice. "Kit, little woman—little wife! My dear! My *dear!*" Then hid his face in the soft curve of her neck and —kissed it.

* * * * *

"You won't go away from me now, will you, Kit?" he said after a time, taking her face between his hands and looking down into it.

"Not if—you'll let me stay, John, after —I've told you something. About—the little boy, you know."

"The little boy?" he repeated, with a smile and a nod. "Is it anything I can't guess, when you speak of him like that? You, with your tender mother heart, that is wrung by the mere mention of the child that was ours—that was part of us both—and had only been lent to us for a month! It isn't like you, Kit; it isn't natural, dear. Tell me something? There *isn't* any 'little boy,' is there?"

"No," she answered softly. "There isn't, John, and—there never has been! If there had, I couldn't have lived away from you, couldn't have kept him from his father all these years."

"I think I suspected something of that sort when you couldn't think of a name to give him, a little while ago," he laughed.

"And you're not angry? You don't grieve over it, John?"

"Grieve over it? My dear girl, how in the world can a man grieve for a thing he's never known—a thing that never entered his life at all? But what under the sun ever made you invent the 'little boy,' you precious trickster?"

"Because you were just a shade disappointed when it wasn't a boy before," she answered softly. "Because, for the little time that God let us have it, we were drawn closer together again, and because I wanted you to come after me—and it seemed the surest way. I thought if I could once get you away from that house —I could hold you so that you would never take me back to it again. And when . . . you didn't come, when you didn't seem to care . . . I kept up the deception because . . . I knew that, some day . . . if you thought there *was* a little boy, there would be an excuse to send for you—and—you'd *have* to come! Oh, John, I've waited so long for this."

"And, after all, it *was* a 'little boy' that brought us together, Kit," he said, as he pulled her down on his breast and kissed her. "The Littlest Boy of all, dear—a naked little chap, with wings!"

The Bargain

MY true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given:
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven:
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his because in me it bides:
My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

By The Camp Fire

Night-Fall in a Canadian Backwood

IT was with some regret that, after making about ten miles more, we found it was time to think of camping for the night. There is always plenty of employment for everybody on these occasions. Some make the fire and collect wood; others clear away the underwood, and spread fern and leafy branches to serve as a bed; others cut tent-poles, and the rest bring up the contents of the canoes. Bury and I used to consider it a duty to plunge into the river morning and evening, besides indulging in an occasional swim throughout the day, when a hot sun and a deep, clear pool formed an irresistible combination.

In less than an hour the bath is over, and we are dressed for dinner in the flannel costume in which we pass the night. The various components of that meal are hissing and bubbling, and manifesting other signs of impatience to be taken off the fire; the tent is pitched in the levellest place, which is abundantly strewed with leaves; and all that we possess with us is scattered about in grotesque confusion. Wet clothes are hung on branches above the fire to dry; and with our legs tucked under us, and our plates in our laps, we look complacently round, and consider ourselves the most enviable of mortals.

Laurence Oliphant.

An Indian Oasis

THE place where they encamped that evening was the first delightful spot they had come to since they left Lahore. On one side of them was a grove full of small Hindoo temples, and planted with the most graceful trees of the East; where the tamarind, the cassia, and the silken plantains of Ceylon were mingled in rich contrast with the high fanlike foliage of the Palmyra—that favourite tree of the luxurious bird that lights up the chambers of its nest with fire-flies. In the middle of the lawn where the pavilion stood there was a tank surrounded by small mangoe-trees, on the clear, cold waters of which floated multitudes of the beautiful red lotus; while at a distance stood the ruins of a strange and awful-looking tower, which seemed old enough to have been the temple of some religion no longer known, and which spoke the voice of desolation in the midst of all that bloom and loveliness.

Thomas Moore.

A Watch-Fire in the Tropics

THE men are sleeping among the trees, some on the ground, and some in grass hammocks slung between the stems. All is silent, save the heavy plunge of the tapir in the river, as he tears up the water-weeds for his night's repast. Sometimes, indeed, the jaguar, as he climbs from one tree-top to another after his prey, wakens the monkeys clustered on the boughs, and they again arouse the birds, and ten minutes of unearthly roars, howls, shrieks and cacklings make the forest ring as if all Pandemonium had broken loose; but that soon dies away again; and, even while it lasts, it is too common a matter to awaken the sleepers, much less to interrupt the council of war which is going on beside the watch-fire between the three adventurers and the faithful Yeo. A hundred times have they held such a council, and in vain; and, for aught they know, this one will be as fruitless as those which have gone before it.

Charles Kingsley.

An Eastern Caravanserai

TEA, and the contrivances for making it, were always a standing part of my baggage. My men gathered in circle round the fire. The Nazarene was in a false position, from having misled us so strangely, and he would have shrunk back, poor devil, into the cold and outer darkness, but I made him draw near, and share the luxuries of the night. My quilt and my pelisse were spread, and the rest of my people had all their capotes, or pelisses, or robes of some sort, which furnished their couches. The men gathered in circle, some kneeling, some sitting, some lying reclined around our common hearth. Sometimes on one, sometimes on another, the flickering light would glare more fiercely.

I always liked the men who attended me on these Eastern travels, for they were all of them brave, cheery-hearted fellows, and, although their following my career brought upon them a pretty large share of those toils and hardships which are so much more amusing to gentlemen than to servants, yet not one of them ever uttered or hinted a syllable of complaint, or even affected to put on an air of resignation. I always liked them, but never, perhaps, so much as when they were thus grouped together under the light of the bivouac fire. I felt towards them as my comrades, rather than as my servants, and took delight in breaking bread with them, and merrily passing the cup. A. W. Kinglake.

Breakfast on the River Bank

LONG before daylight we ranged abroad, hatchet in hand, in search of fuel, and made the yet slumbering and dreaming wood resound with our blows. Then with our fire we burned up a portion of the loitering night, while the kettle sang its homely strain to the morning star. H. D. Thoreau.

Gypsy Fare

THE sun was sinking in the west by the time I returned. I found Belle seated by a fire, over which her kettle was suspended. During my absence she had prepared herself a kind of tent, consisting of large hoops covered over with tarpaulin, quite impenetrable to rain, however violent. "I am glad you are returned," said she, as soon as she perceived me; "I began to be anxious about you. Did you take my advice?"

"Yes," said I; "I went to the public-house and drank ale, as you advised me; it cheered, strengthened, and drove away the horror from my mind—I am much beholden to you."

"I knew it would do you good," said Belle; "I remembered that when the poor women in the great house were afflicted with hysterics and fearful imaginings, the surgeon, who was a good, kind man, used to say: 'Ale, give them ale, and let it be strong.'"

"He was no advocate for tea, then?" said I.

"He had no objection to tea; but he used to say, 'Every thing in its season.' Shall we take ours now—I have waited for you." George Borrow.

Rendezvous

"There are many ways of coming back"

By I. A. R. WYLIE

THE shop door opened quietly, but the moment the stout man with the suit-case crossed the threshold a fierce whirring, like the buzz of a giant wasp, set up, culminating in a shrill unmodulated clamour. The intruder seemed astonished and puzzled. He closed the door hurriedly, but without diminishing the hubbub, which, on the contrary, became more insistent, as though someone were calling frantically for help. The dusk, in which the contents of the shop floated dimly like half-recognised monsters in an aquarium, added to his discomfort. It was not until, accidentally, he stepped to one side that the noise ceased as disconcertingly as it had begun. He glanced down at his feet, and then with a good-humoured twinkle at the shadowy woman behind the counter.

"Couldn't think where it came from," he said.

The woman was knitting. Her lips moved—"nine, ten, eleven, twelve"—before she answered. She did not look up.

"The bell is under the boards, monsieur."

"So I gather. It's enough to scare your customers out of their wits, though, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Most of my customers know about it. They step off at once."

"I see. So you can tell a stranger a mile away. I call that a good idea." He set down his suit-case and rubbed his pink face with a large coloured handkerchief. "I hope, though, it doesn't mean that strangers aren't welcome," he added.

"If they bring business everyone is welcome, monsieur."

"Well, I'm all right, then. You see, madame, I carry business about with me wherever I go. Really, I cannot help myself. It's more than business—it's a hobby, a sport. Another man, landed at a delightful little place like this without a decent train for the next twelve hours, would have taken a holiday. But I'm not like that. I said to myself, 'My friend, who knows? There may be an opening for you even here.' And so—here I am." Remembering at this juncture that he still wore his hat, he removed it with an awkward flourish. "Pardon, madame, it was that noise—it startled the good manners out of me——"

"It doesn't matter," she murmured.

The dusk still troubled him. He stood rooted to the spot as though he were afraid of treading on something that would let loose a fresh outcry.

"I hope, madame, I am not too late——"

"No, no. I did not expect customers. I will make a light."

"The days are beginning to close in," he remarked cheerfully.

She struck a match and held it close to the wick of an oil lamp hanging from the low ceiling. By the feeble yellow glow he could see her white arms, upstretched and bare to the elbow, and the rounded, gracious lines of her body. It pleased him peculiarly. An agreeable exciting trickle seemed to run down his backbone. The dusk receded, and he picked up his suit-case and carried it rather laboriously to the counter, where he set it down again with a little grunt of relief. He had carried it all the way from the station and had had enough of it. Though he was almost disproportionately thick-set for his height, he was not really very strong.

Or rather his strength had grown stiff with disuse. A layer of middle-aged softness covered it. His smart clothes were too tight for him, but ten or fifteen years before he had been slender and wiry and tough as whipcord. Something about his head, sparsely covered with colourless fair hair, and about the small compressed mouth still suggested a lost meagreness. His blue eyes above the round pink cheeks were unexpectedly bright and piercing. They blinked and snapped with good humour. If he had grown fat it was because he laughed a great deal and made the best of things as they came to him.

"Now I am going to show you something," he said.

He opened the suit-case solemnly, like a magician. The lamp was beginning to burn up, and its light was thrown full on the contents—toys of all sorts, dolls, soldiers, animals quaintly carved and running on wooden wheels, and a small mysterious box. He picked up the latter object and held it in the palm of his square hand.

"Behold!" he said.

Apparently he did nothing. The lid flew open, and a French soldier carrying the tricolour in one hand and a sword in the other leapt up. His arms were on wires and waved with a grotesque, life-life fury. From beneath a minute musical box tinkled the "Marseillaise." The stout man burst out laughing.

"I can't help it," he said. "Of course I've seen it a hundred times, and every time I have to laugh. Everyone laughs—children most of all. At the last place I was at I took an order for six dozen and they've repeated already—and it wasn't a big place either. Now you, madame——"

He looked up at her. There was only the width of the counter between them, and their eyes met, not casually, furtively, as is the way with most people who do not know each other, but full and penetratingly. They were like wrestlers who have caught each other unexpectedly in so close a grip that neither can move. The stout man felt the blood pound in his temples. The queer delicious feeling in his backbone came again, only more violently. He had expected nothing like this. If he had managed to get a couple of small orders he would have thought himself lucky. But her eyes were beautiful—amazing. Under the finely arched brows they seemed almost golden.

They dropped at last with an effort, and he saw the blood rush up under the fair skin of her neck. She had blushed like a girl. But, of course, she was not a girl. He caught the glitter of silver threads amidst the dense blackness of her hair. Her white hands were dimpled. The crude sharp lines of youth had everywhere been blurred and softened. She had the allure of maturity—the fascination of knowledge and experience veiled in a tantalizing womanhood. The stout man was glad she was not quite young any more. He was not young himself. Besides, girls bored him. They giggled stupidly. One was always getting into difficulties. A woman like this was different. She understood. She knew how to take care of herself.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked rather confusedly. "It is good, eh?"

"Yes, it is very good."

But she would not look at him. She took up the toy and pressed the soldier back into his box. The next moment he flew out again, waving more frenziedly than ever.

"You see, he is a true Frenchman," the stout man laughed. "You can't suppress him for long. I tell you—I've sold hundreds."

"Our people round here wouldn't care for it," she objected.

"You can't tell. Of course, village folk are slow and conservative—don't I know it? But on the other hand, they jump at something really novel. It's cheap too—nothing to frighten anybody."

"Our people are very poor," she said.

"Well, of course—if you say so—but the place seemed to me rather prosperous—the houses almost new—as though they had been built yesterday. Never had a fire here, I suppose?"

She had gone back to her knitting.

"No, not a fire."

"And your little shop, now—I'll wager you do a nice little business. I can tell, you know. I've got a nose for that sort of thing. Have to have. I've got to know to whom I can give credit and to whom I can't."

He looked about him appraisingly. The vague and rather menacing shapes, which had loomed out of the dusk, had now resolved themselves into a harmless, oddly assorted collection of cheap sweets, toys, haberdashery, writing materials and fancy articles, grouped in painful order on different shelves. Another man might have been contemptuously amused, but he saw at once that the woman behind the counter knew her business.

"You've got the right line, madame, if you don't mind my saying so. All you want now is a few novelties—something to make people talk. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you have three dozen on sale or return, on condition that if you sell them you order another two dozen cash down. It's a fair offer. I don't make it to everyone. Three francs each. You could get five for them easy——"

"I don't know," she said in her low, indistinct voice. "I'd have to think about it——"

" You mean," he said, shaking a square finger playfully at her, " you mean you're going to consult your husband. Now, you're a clever woman, madame, if you don't mind my saying so. I can see that. I'll wager anything you built this nice little business up yourself—without anybody's help. Now isn't that so ? "

" Yes, monsieur, that is so."

" You see. Well—then—why not follow your own good sense." From his breast pocket he took a card. " That is my firm. Noted for fair dealing. In Paris itself I took orders for nearly twenty thousand francs."

¶

HE paused a moment, watching her carefully. She had taken up the card between her thumb and forefinger and was reading it, but he could not see her face. His eyes wandered to the white neck, to where the black smooth hair melted into two soft curls, delicate and symmetrical as flowers. His voice thickened a little. He spoke by rote, only half aware of what he was saying.

" One of the biggest toymakers in the world, madame. You can take my word for it—what we turn out, sells. But your husband—well, we men are difficult—I admit it—difficult and prejudiced. Old-fashioned. Women are more practical. They know that business is business. They have their feet on firm ground—they move with the times. Women are the hope of the world, if you don't mind my saying so."

" All the same, I must think it over. And to-morrow "—she lifted her eyes fleetingly to his—" monsieur will be gone."

The glance had been swift as the passage of a rapier. And yet he could not have mistaken its significance. It was part mocking, part tantalising, part regretful. He felt sure that, with her head bowed again over her knitting, she was smiling to herself.

He leant nearer to her over the counter. His own eyes were brighter than ever. His pink cheeks had grown moist. It was really a piece of luck for him. Business had been a cruel grind—a fierce haggling with hard-headed men who treated him like dirt, a ceaseless rushing hither and thither with conciliatory grins and platitudes. Now an oasis offered itself in which he could relax, become human, the man that he in fact was. And he saw her point of view too. He understood her. Things would be pretty dull in a stagnating little hole like this. Of course she knew she was beautiful. She knew how to use her eyes, at any rate. And he was a man of the world. The gold band twinkling in and out of the light with the flying white hands did not daunt him. He could imagine her block of a husband. Besides, women knew how to manage when they chose—and Frenchwomen especially. You couldn't beat them at it. There was no need to grudge himself a harmless intermezzo.

" I don't know," he said. After all, I've done a lot of business—twice as much as anyone expected. I've earned a rest. My firm is reasonable. Treat them fair and they treat you fair. I might put up here for two or three days—especially if I had a friend to make the time pass——"

He waited, smiling cunningly.

" Monsieur should make many friends," she said, still with a hint of secretive laughter in her voice.

" Oh, I don't know—well, perhaps I do. I'm a friendly fellow. I like to give people a good time. I'd like to give you a good time, if you don't mind my saying so. And why not ? Life is short. One has to take one's chance when it comes."

" That is true, monsieur."

" And perhaps I could do a bit of business as well. I have to think of that, you know. You might tell people about me—sort of introduce me. Country folk are queer—suspicious—a bit behind the times. You could make it easier."

" Yes, perhaps I could do that."

" And the little matter of the three dozen ! Well, we can talk of that later. I won't hurry you. To-morrow at this time, shall we say ? It will be quiet like this ? We don't want our chat interrupted, eh ? Your husband——"

Her hands had fallen quietly in her lap. He had not realised before how pleasing had been the monotonous chatter of her needles. They had filled the shadowy little shop with warmth and homeliness. Now it was as though a heart had stopped beating —as though a spirit had fled—leaving a chill, empty shell.

The woman was looking past him. He felt sure that she was expecting the door to open and someone to come in. He began to hurry his toys back into his suitcase. He wanted suddenly to get away.

"My husband never comes before midnight," she said. "Sometimes not till just before morning."

And now he could not mistake the significance of her tone. He choked a little, stumbling over his words.

"Well—everyone to his taste—so long as one knows—till to-morrow then, madame."

"Till to-morrow, monsieur."

But he was in such a hurry that he forgot the door-bell. It screamed at him like a savage animal violently aroused.

II

THE street was empty. Its emptiness and silence startled him even more than the bell had done. It was like being pitchforked from tumult into nothing. Not that the little shop had been exactly tumultuous. But it had been full of warmth and a kind of excitement. The stout man was not in the least imaginative, and it was probably a childish memory of some fairy tale which made him think of a dark cave full of secret enchantments that had closed suddenly behind him. He set down his suitcase and mopped himself.

"Hot stuff," he said aloud. "No doubt of that—hot stuff!"

But he was already ashamed of his own backwardness. He saw now that he hadn't played up—hadn't taken his opportunity—and it had hurt his pride. He glanced over his shoulder, but evidently she regarded the day's work as finished, for the lamp had been turned out and the shop window gleamed darkly like still water in the moonlight.

"Well, to-morrow is also a day," he consoled himself; for he knew that he would come back and that she had meant him to come back.

In the meantime it bothered him a good deal that he did not know in which direction to turn. He had arrived in daylight, and now the stealthy autumn dusk had advanced to nightfall, and all his casually-observed landmarks were transfigured or obliterated. And there was no one to ask. Even in the afternoon he had noticed the queer emptiness of the place. There was none of the loitering and gossiping which he associated with village life. The people went their way rapidly, avoiding each other, slipping into their houses like rabbits into their warrens. Now they had disappeared altogether.

"Early birds in this nest," the stout man reflected disgustedly. "Must take my chance."

Though the moon was still low in the horizon it lit the opposite side of the narrow street with an unwholesome brightness. The little white houses were like a row of dead faces with blank eyes and gaping mouths. The stout man walked on, whistling to cover the noise of his own footfalls. He was tired, and his patent-leather boots hurt him, and he felt at once chilled and suffocated as one might do in a vault or a long underground tunnel. He was glad when the street came suddenly to an end. And yet he again had the odd, sinking sensation of standing on the edge of nothing.

It was the unexpected vastness of the place. The opposite side of the square was like a distant line of foam. In the centre a crucifix mounted on a low, broad pedestal reared up starkly, throwing a long shadow, and on either hand the houses seemed to shrink back from it—aghast and horror-stricken.

The stout man crossed the square slowly. The cobbles of the street had been replaced by worn slabs of stone, which gave out a melancholy echo under his feet. The suit-case had grown intolerably heavy, and half-way across he set it down on the pedestal of the crucifix and stretched his arms in grotesque and unconscious imitation. He was easier now that he had got away from the houses.

"Some old monument," he thought.

He bent down to decipher the inscription; but there was none. The base of the crucifix was scarred and pitted. There were holes in the soft stone that might have been carved out with a boy's knife. The stout man's eyes travelled slowly up the gaunt, extended figure, and again he suffered a cold discomfort. He looked straight up into the face, bowed tragically as though to meet his gaze. And it was mutilated. The moon, risen above the roofs of the houses, threw black shadows into the empty eyes and into the great hole which gaped from mouth to ear. The nose had gone. And yet it was still human. It still expressed an awful loneliness and pity. The stout man was not sensitive. He had seen ugly things in his life. He had seen repulsive crucifixes. There was one in his own village. But this was different. This

had been hanging there a long time, and corruption had set in.

He remained there for several minutes. He had been hot, and now an icy perspiration broke over his body. A chill breath seemed to be rising out of the stones. He had a baffling sensation of being held there against his will, of being forced to wait until something happened. He knew now that he had never been this way before, and yet somewhere at the back of his brain there lowered a recollection—waiting to pounce upon him.

He shook himself at last.

"I never saw that beastly thing, at any rate," he said.

And with a disgusted oath he caught up the suit-case and set off back the way he had come.

III

"Jean Francois s'en va-t-en guerre,
Tra la la, tra la la;
Mais il reviendra—il reviendra.
Tra la la, tra la la——"

"THAT'S a nice little song you're singing," said the stout man, stepping with roguish exaggeration over the loose board. "But it's a dismal tune, if you don't mind my saying so. One would imagine that poor Jean François wasn't a great favourite. Not much of a welcome waiting for him, eh?"

The woman behind the counter smiled faintly.

"There are many ways of coming back, monsieur."

"Are there? Well—perhaps. Nobody could help coming back to you, anyhow, madame." He made her a gallant bow. "But I don't like dismal songs. I'm a lively fellow. There's enough worry in the world without our making a song about it. That's what I say. And that 'Jean François' business—why, everybody seems to sing it here. The girl at the estaminet was at it only last night. It sort of gets on my nerves——"

"It's an old village song, monsieur. It comes back to us when we are at work and thinking of other things. I won't sing it when you are here."

"That would be a pity. You have a nice voice. I'm very fond of singing. In fact my parents wanted me to go in for the opera. But then—well, my career was interrupted, and afterwards it was too late. I had to make money to keep the family going. Well, it's no use crying over the past——"

"The past is father to the present, monsieur."

"Ah, madame is a philosopher. I'm a simple fellow—too simple, perhaps. I take things as they come. I don't worry."

This time he had not brought his suit-case with him, but he took the square Jack-in-the-box from his pocket and laid it on the counter. "Well, what about this little fellow, eh, madame? Shall we say three dozen, sale or return?"

"Yes, I have thought it over; three dozen, then."

"I thought you would. You won't regret it. I have a paper here—if you would just sign your name they will be delivered in a week. And in two days you will be sold out—hey, presto!"

He was in a merry, self-confident mood and smarter than ever. He wore a fancy waistcoat, and his pointed patent leather boots had been polished till they shone. The night before he had been over-tired by the long journey and inclined to imagine things. His nerves had run away with him. Now he was quite sure of himself."

"If you would sign just there, madame—"

She had found pen and ink, and she wrote in the place which he had indicated with his stubby forefinger—carefully and laboriously, after the manner of a peasant. It gave him time to look at her unobserved, to let his good-humoured greedy little eyes linger on the smooth white nape of her neck with the two delicate curls, on the arms bare to the elbow and round and lovely and strong. Well, his imagination had not deceived him on that score at any rate. You might scour the aristocracy of Europe for anything so richly beautiful. He grew a little warm, looking at her. He could feel his heart against his ribs.

"There, monsieur——"

He took the paper from her. Their hands touched, and it was as though a current of electricity had rushed up his arm to his brain.

"Marguerite Froissart. What a pretty name! I like the Marguerite best, though, if you don't mind my saying so. And I'll tell you what—you're prettier than either of them."

She gave him one of her quick deep glances.

"Monsieur is flattering. I am an old woman."

"Old—bah!" he snapped his fingers. "That for your old age."

"Fifteen years ago I was just twenty."

"Well, that's one way of telling me. I'm not much older myself. Thirty-five. What's that? Nothing. One is at the beginning of life. Anything is possible."

"Anything," she admitted under her breath.

"One has learnt wisdom. One looks at things sensibly, reasonably. One knows that one must take one's chance of a good time—when it offers itself."

He leant nearer to her, with his elbow on the counter. He felt a subtle fragrant warmth creeping over his senses like the breath of an enchantment. She drew back a little. On her half-averted face he caught the flicker of a smile. He laughed. He knew the game. Two could play at it.

"Why, you're so young you play with toys——"

He pounced upon a rag doll, soiled and battered, which he saw lying forgotten on one side, and brandished it triumphantly, accusingly. "Aren't you ashamed——"

She gave it a swift sidelong glance and resumed her knitting.

"That — belongs to my daughter, monsieur."

"A daughter who still plays with dolls, then. That's almost as good. I'll wager she's not more than five years old."

She seemed to calculate.

"Yes—about five."

"You see. Five. A charming age. I envy you. I love children. Give her Monsieur Jack-in-the-box with my love. Do you know, madame, I have one ambition in life. It is to have a home of my own—a wife—a quiverful of jolly boys and girls to play with. But it's a hard business for a fellow like me. I'm too generous. Money comes and money goes. And then my work—always on the move—rushing about from one place to another. There's no home in the world for me."

The tears came to his eyes. He was deeply moved. He saw suddenly how sad everything was. "Sometimes it's almost too much for me. Last night, for instance, I felt so alone and friendless—and then this place, it isn't particularly cheerful, if you don't mind my saying so. When I got into that square of yours, as deserted as a desert, I wanted to cut my throat——"

She stopped knitting, and again the blank left by those softly chattering needles chilled him. It put him unaccountably on his guard.

"The square? We have no square, monsieur. If it is the church you mean——"

"I didn't see any church. There was a battered old crucifix——"

"The church is there, monsieur. It is still there."

He pinched his lower lip between his finger and thumb, blinking rapidly as though disconcerted by some sudden thought.

"You mean—oh, I see; it hadn't occurred to me. Well, it's a dismal place. You people ought to build there—get on with things. No use brooding over the past. That's what I say."

"The church is very old, monsieur. They say there are kings of France buried in the vaults."

He nodded.

"I can believe that. I should think their spooks were on the prowl last night. I'm not superstitious, but I didn't like the place. I shan't go there again. I'm a genial sort of fellow. No ghosts for me. I like to have friends, a good time, a pretty woman——" The little shop seemed to have grown stiflingly hot. The heat blurred his vision, lay thick in his throat. Through the blaze he could see her hand shining on the counter—inert and waiting. Before he had time to think he had seized it and was kissing it furiously. He could feel the cool, strong fingers tighten on his. He was swept off his feet, drunken with an indescribable excitement. "Marguerita—Marguerita——"

"Hush," she said quietly, imperatively.

She withdrew her hand. The door had opened and out of the dusk an old woman came into the shop. She wore a shawl over her gaunt shoulders, and the grey straight hair hung in neglected wisps about her face. Her skin was yellow and lined, and she had brooding, melancholy eyes, deep sunken under the bony brows, which rested on the man and then dropped, avoiding him.

He coughed. He fidgeted with the goods on the counter, pretending to examine them. He was trembling all over. It had happened just as he had meant it to happen. Or perhaps not quite. It was like paddling in a shallow pool and stumbling suddenly into deep black waters.

"For three sous, then."

" *Vous voilà, Maman.*"

" And I have a note for you from the Dubois."

" Thank you. Give them my regards."

" Good-night."

" Good-night."

The old woman went out as she had come in, noiselessly, avoiding the treacherous bell, closing the door cautiously behind her. He could see her shadow creep past the shop window.

" Marguerita," he whispered thickly.

She looked straight at him. There was no light laughter in her strange eyes, but an overwhelming, torrential emotion. And yet her lips smiled steadily. They made mock of him. He seized her hand again. He pressed his hot lips to her white arm. And now she no longer resisted; rather it was as though she, too, were laying fast hold of him. " Marguerita, you're the finest beauty I've set eyes on. I fell head over heels in love with you the moment I saw you; I couldn't help myself. I stayed on because of you—I forgot business—everything. I knew we had to be friends. You believe in fate, don't you? "

" Yes, I believe in fate."

" When I got off that train I had a queer feeling—as though it had all happened to me before, as though I'd come back, and something amazing was going to happen."

But even in his extraordinary excitement he knew that she was looking past him. His eyes, raised involuntarily, followed hers, and it seemed to him that people were watching him through the shop windows—white ghostly smudges pressed against the thick panes—blurred, distorted faces.

" We're not safe here," he muttered. " Anyone might come in. I must see you. I've got to have you to myself. Isn't there any spot in this God-forsaken nest? "

Her eyes had dropped. All at once she changed. She became demure—shrinking, virginal. Her hand quivered in his. His self-confidence came back to him with a rush. He had been half afraid. Now he was master of himself—of her. He laughed unsteadily.

" Come," he said, winking at her, " you're a clever woman. Surely it can be done."

" In a little place like this? " she murmured. " People watch——"

" Don't I know it! But at night—eh? You said your husband didn't come back till late. An hour's *tête-à-tête* with a poor wanderer—come now! "

" There's the mill," she said, scarcely above her breath. " I used to live there. It's empty now. You go across the wooden bridge and over to the further bend of the river—up the wooden steps——"

" I've seen the place," he whispered back. " You can see it from the inn. At nine o'clock."

" At nine o'clock, then."

She gave his hand a furtive pressure and released herself, drawing back into her deep calm. He understood. He stood up, breathing heavily, but with his light-blue eyes dancing with triumphant excitement. From the door he made her a bow, profound and mocking.

" Au revoir, madame."

" Au revoir, monsieur."

The bell sent its furious menacing cry after him. It was strange that he could not remember it.

IV

HE took care to leave the inn unobserved. The evening had turned cold with a hint of rain in the wind, and he did not want to draw attention to himself by unusual conduct. Above all things, he did not want trouble. A *commis-voyageur* who made even a village impossible for himself was a fool. He had to take his pleasures discreetly with a due regard to business.

" I'll be off to-morrow," he thought. " That'll put an end to it."

He was pleased to find that he could consider the episode so coolly. In the shop he had lost his head. He had behaved like a raw youth, and it made him purse his small mouth uneasily, to realise that there had been a moment when he had been prepared to fling his career to the winds and himself to the devil. Somehow or other the woman and the dim overheated room had got under his skin and stirred up his neatly harnessed senses to an almost forgotten turbulence. He comforted himself with the thought that it had only been a momentary upheaval with no aftermath. He could go forth on his little adventure in the right spirit of bonhomie and gallant discretion as became a man of the world. But at the bottom he nursed a grievance—a kind of resentment. She had made him dance to her tune. Now, at any rate, she should dance to his.

Even after he had left the inn well behind him he walked slowly, casually, like a man going for an aimless stroll. On the bridge he lingered a moment and looked down at the broad, deep river running swiftly, almost soundlessly, between the arches. He was not imaginative, but he thought of Marguerite Froissart. She was like that water. One had to look out or one would be swept off one's feet.

He lit a cigar, shading his match under the parapet, and smiled knowingly to himself. He had dined well, with a bottle of Graves to wash down an excellent chicken, and he felt warm and stout and self-confident.

The wind covered the sky with a thin veil of drifting cloud. To the south-east, whence it came, lay a black mass moving imperceptibly, like the closing of a monstrous trapdoor overhead. The light was curiously deceptive. The stout man, for instance, could see the old mill at the bend of the river quite distinctly, but the ground at his feet lay in a bog of shadow. His progress was made the more difficult by the condition of the road, which was in fact little more than a cart track. The ruts were deep and slippery, and he stumbled in and out of them cursing to himself.

Trivial though the annoyance was it disturbed his poise, his pleasant sense of security and power, and in an effort to escape he clambered awkwardly up a steep bank on his right hand, feeling along its edge with the point of his walking-stick. But his condition was scarcely bettered. In the increasing darkness he ran the risk either of losing all contact with the road, or of tumbling back into it painfully and ignominiously. Obeying an impulse he suddenly left the embankment altogether, striking across the fields towards the mill, which, lying to the west, was still visible—a grotesque shadow that peered over the river mist, watching him.

Almost at once he regretted his decision. A coarse, tall grass whipped his legs with its wet thongs. His feet squelched in and out of the clay soil with a thick slobbery sound that was familiar and detestable. This, too, had happened to him before. On another night in his life he had toiled against mud and rain and wind. And he had been angry. The memory, rising out of a pit of forgotten things, increased his obscure resentment, which flung itself on the thought of the woman who waited for him with a kind of hunger. He would show her that he was not the man to be disturbed for nothing.

He stumbled over a mound of earth and righted himself with a convulsive effort. The trap-door had closed overhead suddenly and completely. His hand, groping blindly for support, struck against a wooden stem that rose straight out of the ground to the level of his waist. There were others. All at once he found himself slithering and stumbling over a sea of rolling earth, battering himself against an incredible hideous maze of stakes and cross-bars that seemed to dance about him in his desperate effort to escape, barking his shins, tearing the skin from his outflung, frantic hands, striking into his soft body.

He stood still at last, like a maddened horse that has exhausted itself against an implacable terror. He was panting and wet with a cold perspiration. But gradually he grew calmer. He reasoned with himself. In a brief lull in the wind he struck a match, holding it to the obstacle nearest him.

It was a cross. In the circle of flickering light and spreading into the mist beyond were other crosses, rank upon rank, uniform, dropped from their fantastic dance into a martial rigidity, like mute, stunted children playing at soldiers. They stood round the stout man and seemed to wait for him, pathetic and menacing. On each cross was a brief inscription, roughly carved and almost illegible.

The match went out. He drew himself up with a deep breath and rubbed the moisture out of his eyes. He felt badly shaken. It was a nasty thing to have happened. But after all, a cemetery was a cemetery. If he had not read the inscription on the cross nearest him it would not have troubled him so much. He muttered aloud:

"Good heavens!—it isn't possible—and yet—well, one never knows—— Why not?"

He nerved himself to go on. Now that he had seen them and knew them for what they were, the crosses stood still and let him pass among them without hindrance. But the mounds over which he slithered made him sick. It was like treading on soft decaying bodies. He had to remind himself that they were artificial shapes made to flatter the gravedigger's conventional sense of decency. In reality, no doubt, the bodies had been lumped together anyhow.

When suddenly the crosses fell away from him he cried out. It was like falling

headlong into nothing. He began to run in sheer terror, for he had now lost all sense of direction. The mill had vanished; the mist encircled him. The blood throbbed in his ears so that the sound of water was lost. In his blind haste he plunged on until he almost flung himself against a black, invisible wall, which to his inflamed fancy was solid darkness.

He stood back, panting and furious. He knew now where he was. Guided by a thread of light overhead he could make out the wooden steps of which Madame Froissart had spoken. He grunted to himself. It had been a beastly business. But it was over. He was wet through and dishevelled, and the pleasant after-dinner glow had been kindled to a devastating passion beyond his control. From the good-humoured man of the world he had been shaken into something violent and primitive. But he did not care. He was glad. He was free. He had burst his chains. Too many people had treated him like dirt.

He began the ascent of the slippery steps, licking his cracked lips.

V

THE steps were rotten with moisture, and he felt them bend under him. He heard the mournful creak of the locked millwheel and the muttering of the mill itself, moribund and helpless in the grip of the rising wind. Had it not been for the narrow golden strip overhead he would have turned back. He would not have believed that a living thing, beyond the scurrying rats, could be in the place.

There must have been a strong draught somewhere. The door at the top of the steps resisted him, and the resistance stung his nervous impatience to fury. He flung his whole weight against the panels, which gave way violently with a screech of warped wood and rusty hinges, flinging him over a last high step into the light. He was at first too blinded and breathless to see what lay before him, and the door, caught in a sudden gust, slammed to again. Then he gasped like a man winded by an unexpected terrifying blow, and the next moment he was laughing noisily.

"Good heavens—a party!"

The room was very large. In other days it might have been used as a granary. The high rafters lost themselves in darkness. There were four candles on the long bare table, and their flames waved frantically like little flags in the wind that came from the loosely shuttered window opposite.

The room was full of women. They surrounded the table. They seemed to crowd endlessly out of the shadow. Madame Froissart sat at the head of the table. She was knitting, and the soft click of her needles played an odd accompaniment to the sombre rush of the water underfoot. Beside her was the old woman with the grey dishevelled hair, staring in front of her with her sunken melancholy eyes.

They were of all ages, but one thing was common to them all. It was as though a grey, scarcely perceptible mist enveloped them. They were like people in whom life, diverted from its course, had taken a strange new form. One of them was different from the rest. She stood immediately opposite the stout man, so that he saw her first. She was not a peasant. She had an air of authority, and her clothes, flung on anyhow, were of a faded, tattered elegance. A flowered hat perched crazily on her grey hair. Her lips kept up an incessant movement, but no sound came from them. She might have been ludicrous or pitiable. She was neither.

And there was a girl—big and fat—with a large misshapen head and a lolling mouth and dead eyes. She sat on the right of Madame Froissart and played with the Jack-in-the-box, who jumped in and out of his prison like a mad thing, the tiny musical contrivance underneath him tinkling broken fragments of the "Marseillaise" in a desperate hurry.

The stout man took off his cap and made a stiff, satirical bow. He was choked with anger. He saw that he had been fooled and made ridiculous. He wanted to beat the woman at the head of the table. As it was he had to get himself out of the affair gracefully.

"I beg pardon, mesdames. I see I intrude. There is a nasty storm coming up and I took refuge. I had no idea the place was occupied."

He congratulated himself. It was neatly done. Then it struck him as odd that no one looked at him. They seemed to be unaware that he had spoken, or even that he was there at all. A horrible, ridiculous suspicion assailed him that they were ghosts—or that he himself was unreal, the shadow of someone's dream.

"It was in the autumn," Madame Froissart said. "I remember it clearly because we had just finished with the harvest. A wonderful harvest. On the very night that they came Christophe told me there had not been anything like it for twenty years."

"We had been talking of their coming," a voice said out of the twilight. "We knew that it might happen. We were always hoping, though——"

"Fire and blood everywhere——"

Madame Froissart nodded deferentially towards the woman in the flowered hat.

"Of course, mademoiselle. They came to the château first. It is not likely that you would forget."

"We saw the flames go up. It was a dark night. I was sitting sewing, I remember, and suddenly our windows were all red——"

"Look here," the stout man interrupted, "I'm intruding. Permit me to withdraw."

He turned, but one of the women stood behind him against the door. She was old and gaunt, and one side of her face was badly scarred. He could have knocked her down easily, but he did not want to touch her. He shrank from the very thought.

"Of course, if you ladies insist," he said, laughing immoderately. "But let me join in, at any rate. Pray introduce me to the company, madame."

He appealed to the woman at the head of the table. He was not angry with her now. He was glad that they were friends. He wanted to be friendly—get on a good footing. But she did not look up from her knitting. It seemed to him that she had changed. The mist lay over her too, but also she had grown younger—more familiar. It was like one of those mad dreams in which one person gradually becomes somebody else. The girl beside her was the only one who appeared to have heard him. She gazed idiotically in his direction, making little uncouth sounds as though she were trying to say something. She had ceased to play with the Jack-in-the-box, whose arms still waved, though with an increasing dejection.

"We did nothing. Then François came running from the château. He told us to look out for ourselves."

"Fire and blood—fire and blood," said the woman in the flowered hat.

She spoke more clearly, and they turned towards her gravely.

"Yes, mademoiselle, you saw it all. François told us how you stood at the head of the great stairs. It was wonderful. Even they stopped for a moment. You said: 'Gentlemen, everything in my house is at your disposal, but leave the village.'"

"You tried to save us."

"We shall never forget that, mademoiselle."

"Fire and blood," the woman in the flowered hat repeated.

"They laughed. One of them ran up the stairs and caught hold of you. That was the last François saw."

"They found the wine cellar. They turned on the taps. They lay on their faces lapping it up like dogs."

The stout man beat his fist in the palm of his hand.

"Listen," he repeated loudly. "I don't know what you're talking about. It's all nothing to do with me."

It was like being in a padded cell. No one heard him. He flung himself against soft walls that would not break. His voice was muffled.

"It's absurd—absurd!" he repeated indignantly.

Madame Froissart counted her stitches. He could see her lips move. They were all silent for a moment. The steady mutter of the water underneath and the crack of the rotten rafters resumed predominance. The wind rushing between the cracks of the shutters and under the warped door sent dust scurrying in little whirlpools across the floor. The candlelight waved frantically, making the shadows behind the women sway hither and thither, become suddenly monstrous and then shrink to nothing.

"Some of us ran into the fields. But most of us thought it better to stay where we were. After all, we were inoffensive people. We had done nothing. We had a right——"

"We heard them in the distance. I remember Gustav leaning across the table and patting my hand. 'It will be all right,' he said. 'We are old—everyone respects grey hairs.' The children woke up crying. They came running to him. But I was not afraid for them. I thought: 'The children will be all right.'"

"You are all mad—every one of you!" shouted the stout man. "This is a lunatic asylum."

"We are all mad," the woman in the flowered hat said. "Every one of us."

Madame Froissart put down her work.

She leant forward, with her chin resting on her strong white hand, her gleaming eyes fixed beyond the stout man on the door behind him, and he knew that she was watching for it to open.

" I had been standing here, watching and praying. I dared not go to the window, but I could see the red glare on the wall opposite. I could hear screams and shouting. I was terrified—especially for Christophe, who had not come home. It was then close on midnight. Suddenly he came up the steps. He said : ' It's all over. They're after me. I've killed one of them. They spitted old Gustav on their bayonets. I couldn't stand it. Pauline's children are lying in the gutter. They have set fire to the church.' "

" No—no ! " the stout man shouted. " It's nothing to do with me. I wasn't there—I swear I wasn't. I don't remember the place. If I had been there I should have remembered it. It stands to reason—"

The sweat ran down his limbs. If they had been men he would have fought them—fought his way out. But they were more terrible. They were waiting for him to give the signal. They were closing in on him, noiselessly, imperceptibly. His soul quaked, went sick before the thought of what would happen when at last they touched him. And yet none of them had moved or looked at him. Only that strange girl.

" ' There's no hope,' Christophe said. ' I shall kill both of us.' He ran to the box where he kept his old gun, but it was unloaded. Of course it was unloaded. We were peaceful people. And before he could do anything they were crowding up the steps. Their red faces were in the doorway. I tried to fling myself in front of Christophe, but it was too late. They had seen him—and they fired."

" Can you remember what happened then, Madame Froissart ? "

" They sacked our home. Somehow or other the mill wouldn't burn, so they made a bonfire of the furniture outside. This table was too big—beside, Christophe had fallen across it—and even they——"

" And then ? "

" One of them remained behind."

" I deny it—I deny it absolutely. If you have anything against me say it straight out. I'm a peaceful fellow. I do no harm to anyone. You oughtn't to brood over the past like this. If it's money you want—why, I'm willing to do the right thing."

" The light had gone out, but there was light enough from the bonfire. His companions had gone off laughing and joking. I could see him distinctly, standing with his back to the door, grinning at me. I can hear his voice. ' You're a pretty bit of goods, if you don't mind my saying so.' "

The stout man's voice rose to a scream.

" I was drunk—I was drunk ! Oh, my God—I didn't know what I was doing ! "

" That was fifteen years ago."

" You see—fifteen years—fifteen years—" He dropped to his knees. He crawled towards them. " You can't—you can't—you have hearts—you are women—good Christians—forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them—besides, I tell you I was drunk."

They did not see him. They did not hear him. Madame Froissart picked up her knitting. The woman behind him spoke for the first time.

" And then Yvette was born ? "

" Nine months later."

He turned his head slowly, inevitably towards the girl seated at the table. She was looking at him with her opaque, sightless eyes, without knowledge, without understanding. Then, as though wearied in an effort to grasp something beyond her reach, she went back to her toy. But the spring had broken, and she began to cry.

The stout man gulped. He knew that the end had come—the breaking-point.

But they had forgotten to guard the window opposite. He remembered it clearly. If he could only reach it before they guessed his intention. He began to shuffle towards it. His knees shook under him. His feet were leaden with nightmare. There was only a little way to go. At each step he expected to feel their hands on him, tearing him down. He could feel the heat of their breath. But no one moved. He sobbed aloud in the agony of their indifference. Like a panic-stricken, tortured animal he flung his soft body against the shutters, passing out with a broken whimper into space and silence.

The women sang as they made their way home over the dark fields.

" *Jean Francois s'en va-t-en guerre,*
Tra la la, tra la la ;
Mais il reviendra—il reviendra.
Tra la la, tra la la."

The last notes of their voices were prolonged like the last notes of a clarion call.

Mliss

By BRET HARTE

Here is a further specimen of the love story, in which a singularly delicate situation is treated with extraordinary charm and insight. The genius of Bret Harte is shown at its best in those of his stories which call for a skilful blending of the finer and coarser elements in human existence.—Ed.

JUST where the Sierra Nevada begins to subside in gentler undulations, and the rivers grow less rapid and yellow, on the side of a great red mountain, stands "Smith's Pocket." Seen from the red road at sunset, in the red light and the red dust, its white houses look like the outcropping of quartz on the mountain-side. The red stage, topped with red-shirted passengers, is lost to view half-a-dozen times in the tortuous descent, turning up unexpectedly in out-of-the-way places, and vanishing altogether within a hundred yards of the town. It is probably owing to this sudden twist in the road that the advent of a stranger at Smith's Pocket is usually attended with a peculiar circumstance. Dismounting from the vehicle at the stage-office, the too confident traveller is apt to walk straight out of town under the impression that it lies in quite another direction. It is related that one of the tunnel-men, two miles from town, met one of these self-reliant passengers with a carpet-bag, umbrella, *Harper's Magazine*, and other evidences of "Civilisation and Refinement," plodding along over the road he had just ridden, vainly endeavouring to find the settlement of Smith's Pocket.

An observant traveller might have found some compensation for his disappointment in the weird aspect of that vicinity. There were huge fissures on the hill-side, and displacements of the red soil, resembling more the chaos of some primary elemental upheaval than the work of man; while, half-way down, a long flume straddled its narrow body and disproportionate legs over the chasm, like an enormous fossil of some forgotten antediluvian. At every step smaller ditches crossed the road, hiding in their sallow depths unlovely streams that crept away to a clandestine union with the great yellow torrent below, and here and there were the ruins of some cabin, with the chimney alone left intact and the hearthstone open to the skies.

The settlement of Smith's Pocket owed its origin to the finding of a "pocket" on its site by a veritable Smith. Five thousand dollars were taken out of it in one half-hour by Smith. Three thousand dollars were expended by Smith and others in erecting a flume and in tunnelling. And then Smith's Pocket was found to be only a pocket, and subject, like other pockets, to depletion. Although Smith pierced the bowels of the great red mountain, that five thousand dollars was the first and last return of his labour. The mountain grew reticent of its golden secrets, and the flume steadily ebbed away the remainder of Smith's fortune. Then Smith went into quartz-mining; then into quartz-milling; then into hydraulics and ditching; and then by easy degrees into saloon-keeping. Presently it was whispered that Smith was drinking a great deal; then it was known that Smith was a habitual drunkard, and then people began to think, as they are apt to, that he had never been anything else. But the settlement of Smith's Pocket, like that of most discoveries, was happily not dependent on the fortune of its pioneer, and other parties projected tunnels and found pockets. So Smith's Pocket became a settlement, with its two fancy stores, its two hotels, its one express-office, and its two first families.

Occasionally its one long straggling street was over-awed by the assumption of the latest San Francisco fashions, imported per express, exclusively to the first families; making outraged Nature, in the ragged outline of her furrowed surface, look still more homely, and putting personal insult on that greater portion of the population to whom the Sabbath, with a change of linen, brought the necessity of cleanliness, without the luxury of adornment. Then there was a Methodist Church, and

hard by a Monte Bank, and a little beyond, on the mountain-side, a graveyard; and then a little school-house.

"The Master," as he was known to his little flock, sat alone one night in the school-house, with some open copy-books before him, carefully making those bold and full characters which are supposed to combine the extremes of chirographical and moral excellence, and had got as far as "Riches are deceitful," and was elaborating the noun with an insincerity of flourish that was quite in the spirit of his text, when he heard a gentle tapping. The woodpeckers had been busy about the roof during the day, and the noise did not disturb his work. But the opening of the door, and the tapping continuing from the inside, caused him to look up. He was slightly startled by the figure of a young girl, dirty and shabbily clad. Still, her great black eyes, her coarse, uncombed, lustreless black hair falling over her sun-burned face, her red arms and feet streaked with the red soil, were all familiar to him. It was Melissa Smith—Smith's motherless child.

"What can she want here?" thought the master. Everybody knew "Mliss," as she was called, throughout the length and height of Red Mountain. Everybody knew her as an incorrigible girl. Her fierce, ungovernable disposition, her mad freaks and lawless character, were in their way as proverbial as the story of her father's weaknesses, and as philosophically accepted by the townsfolk. She wrangled with and fought the school-boys with keener invective and quite as powerful arm. She followed the trails with a woodman's craft, and the master had met her before, miles away, shoeless, stockingless, and bareheaded on the mountain road. The miners' camps along the stream supplied her with subsistence during these voluntary pilgrimages, in freely offered alms.

Not but that a larger protection had been previously extended to Mliss. The Rev. Joshua McSnagley, "stated" preacher, had placed her in the hotel as servant, by way of preliminary refinement, and had introduced her to his scholars at Sunday school. But she threw plates occasionally at the landlord, and quickly retorted to the cheap witticisms of the guests, and created in the Sabbath school a sensation that was so inimical to the orthodox dullness and placidity of that institution, that with a decent regard for the starched frocks and unblemished morals of the two pink-and-white-faced children of the first families, the reverend gentleman had her ignominiously expelled. Such were the antecedents and such the character of Mliss, as she stood before the master. It was shown in the ragged dress, the unkempt hair, and bleeding feet, and asked his pity. It flashed from her black, fearless eyes, and commanded his respect.

"I come here to-night," she said rapidly and boldly, keeping her hard glance on his, "because I knew you was alone. I wouldn't come here when them gals was here. I hate 'em, and they hates me. That's why. You keep school, don't you? I want to be teached!"

¶

IF to the shabbiness of her apparel and uncomeliness of her tangled hair and dirty face she had added the humility of tears, the master would have extended to her the usual moiety of pity, and nothing more. But with the natural, though illogical instincts of his species, her boldness awakened in him something of that respect which all original natures pay unconsciously to one another in any grade. And he gazed at her the more fixedly as she went on still rapidly, her hand on that door-latch and her eyes on his:—

"My name's Mliss—Mliss Smith! You can bet your life on that. My father's Old Smith—Old Bummer Smith—that's what's the matter with him. Mliss Smith—and I'm coming to school!"

"Well?" said the master.

Accustomed to be thwarted and opposed, often wantonly and cruelly, for no other purpose than to excite the violent impulses of her nature, the master's phlegm evidently took her by surprise. She stopped; she began to twist a lock of her hair between her fingers; and the rigid line of upper lip, drawn over the wicked little teeth, relaxed and quivered slightly. Then her eyes dropped, and something like a blush struggled up to her cheek, and tried to assert itself through the splashes of redder soil and the sunburn of years. Suddenly she threw herself forward, calling on God to strike her dead, and fell, quite weak and helpless, with her face on the master's desk, crying and sobbing as if her heart would break.

The master lifted her gently, and waited for the paroxysm to pass. When, with face

still averted, she was repeating between her sobs the *mea culpa* of childish penitence that " she'd be good, she didn't mean to," &c., it came to him to ask her why she had left Sabbath school.

Why had she left the Sabbath school ?—why ? O yes. What did he (McSnagley) want to tell her she was wicked for ? What did he tell her that God hated her for ? If God hated her, what did she want to go to Sabbath school for ? *She* didn't want to be " beholden " to anybody who hated her.

Had she told McSnagley this ?

Yes, she had.

The master laughed. It was a hearty laugh, and echoed so oddly in the little school-house, and seemed so inconsistent and discordant with the sighing of the pines without, that he shortly corrected himself with a sigh. The sigh was quite as sincere in its way, however, and after a moment of serious silence he asked about her father.

Her father ? What father ? Whose father ? What had he ever done for her ? Why did the girls hate her ? Come now ! what made the folks say, " Old Bummer Smith's Mliss ! " when she passed ? Yes ; O yes. She wished he was dead—she was dead—everybody was dead ; and her sobs broke forth anew.

The master then, leaning over her, told her as well as he could what you or I might have said after hearing such unnatural theories from childish lips ; only bearing in mind, perhaps better than you or I, the unnatural facts of her ragged dress, her bleeding feet, and the omnipresent shadow of her drunken father. Then, raising her to her feet, he wrapped his shawl around her, and, bidding her come early in the morning, he walked with her down the road. There he bade her " good-night." The moon shone brightly on the narrow path before them. He stood and watched the bent little figure as it staggered down the road, and waited until it had passed the little graveyard and reached the curve of the hill, where it turned and stood for a moment, a mere atom of suffering outlined against the far-off patient stars. Then he went back to his work. But the lines of the copy-book thereafter faded into long parallels of never-ending road, over which childish figures seemed to pass sobbing and crying into the night. Then, the little school-house seeming lonelier than before, he shut the door and went home.

The next morning Mliss came to school. Her face had been washed, and her coarse black hair bore evidence of recent struggles with the comb, in which both had evidently suffered. The old defiant look shone occasionally in her eyes, but her manner was tamer and more subdued. Then began a series of little trials and self-sacrifices, in which master and pupil bore an equal part, and which increased the confidence and sympathy between them. Although obedient under the master's eye, at times during recess, if thwarted or stung by a fancied slight, Mliss would rage in ungovernable fury, and many a palpitating young savage, finding himself matched with his own weapons of torment, would seek the master with torn jacket and scratched face, and complaints of the dreadful Mliss. There was a serious division among the townspeople on the subject, some threatening to withdraw their children from such evil companionship, and others as warmly upholding the course of the master in his work of reclamation.

Meanwhile, with a steady persistence that seemed astonishing to him, on looking back afterward, the master drew Mliss gradually out of the shadow of her past life, as though it were but her natural progress down the narrow path on which he had set her feet the moonlit night of their first meeting. Remembering the experience of the evangelical McSnagley, he carefully avoided that Rock of Ages on which that unskilful pilot had shipwrecked her young faith. But if, in the course of her reading, she chanced to stumble upon those few words which have lifted such as she above the level of the older, the wiser, and the more prudent—if she learned something of a faith that is symbolised by suffering, and the old light softened in her eyes, it did not take the shape of a lesson. A few of the plainer people had made up a little sum by which the ragged Mliss was enabled to assume the garments of respect and civilisation ; and often a rough shake of the hand, and words of commendation from a red-shirted and burly figure, sent a glow to the cheek of the young master, and set him to thinking if it was altogether deserved.

¶

THREE months had passed from the time of their first meeting, and the master was sitting late one evening over the moral and sententious copies, when there came a tap

at the door, and again Mliss stood before him. She was neatly clad and clean-faced, and there was nothing, perhaps, but the long black hair and bright black eyes to remind him of his former apparition. "Are you busy?" she asked. "Can you come with me?"—and on his signifying his readiness, in her old wilful way she said, "Come, then, quick!"

They passed out of the door together, and into the dark road. As they entered the town, the master asked her whither she was going. She replied, "To see my father."

It was the first time he had heard her call him by that filial title, or, indeed, anything more than "Old Smith" or the "Old Man." It was the first time in three months that she had spoken of him at all, and the master knew she had kept resolutely aloof from him since her great change. Satisfied, from her manner, that it was fruitless to question her purpose, he passively followed. In out-of-the-way places, low groggeries, restaurants, and saloons, in gambling-hells and dance-houses, the master, preceded by Mliss, came and went. In the reeking smoke and blasphemous outcries of low dens, the child, holding the master's hand, stood and anxiously gazed, seemingly unconscious of all, in the one absorbing nature of her pursuit. Some of the revellers, recognising Mliss, called to the child to sing and dance for them, and would have forced liquor upon her but for the interference of the master. Others, recognising him, mutely made way for them to pass. So an hour slipped by. Then the child whispered in his ear that there was a cabin on the other side of the creek crossed by the long flume, where she thought he still might be. Thither they crossed—a toilsome half-hour's walk—but in vain.

They were returning by the ditch at the abutment of the flume, gazing at the lights of the town on the opposite bank, when suddenly, sharply, a quick report rang out on the clear night air. The echoes caught it, and carried it round and round Red Mountain, and set the dogs to barking all along the streams. Lights seemed to dance and move quickly on the outskirts of the town for a few moments, the stream rippled quite audibly beside them, a few stones loosened themselves from the hill-side and splashed into the stream, a heavy wind seemed to surge the branches of the funereal pines, and then the silence seemed to fall thicker, heavier, and deadlier. The master turned towards Mliss with an unconscious gesture of protection, but the child had gone. Oppressed by a strange fear, he ran quickly down the trail to the river's bed, and, jumping from boulder to boulder, reached the base of Red Mountain and the outskirts of the village. Midway of the crossing, he looked up and held his breath in awe. For high above him on the narrow flume, he saw the fluttering little figure of his late companion, crossing swiftly in the darkness.

He climbed the bank, and, guided by a few lights, moving about a central point on the mountain, soon found himself breathless among a crowd of awe-stricken and sorrowful men. Out from among them the child appeared, and, taking the master's hand, led him silently before what seemed a ragged hole in the mountain. Her face was quite white, but her excited manner gone, and her look that of one to whom some long-expected event had at last happened—an expression that, to the master in his bewilderment, seemed almost like relief. The walls of the cavern were partly propped by decaying timbers. The child pointed to what appeared to be some ragged, cast-off clothes, left in the hole by the late occupant. The master approached nearer with his flaming dip, and bent over them. It was Smith, already cold, with a pistol in his hand and a bullet in his heart, lying beside his empty "pocket."

II

THE opinion which McSnagley expressed in reference to a "change of heart" supposed to be experienced by Mliss was more forcibly described in the gulches and tunnels. It was thought there that Mliss had "struck a good lead." So when there was a new grave added to the little enclosure, and, at the expense of the master, a little board and inscription put above it, the Red Mountain Banner came out quite handsomely, and did the fair thing to the memory of one of "our oldest Pioneers," alluding gracefully to that "bane of noble intellects," and otherwise genteelly shelving our dear brother with the past. "He leaves an only child to mourn his loss," says the Banner, "who is now an exemplary scholar, thanks to the efforts of the Rev. Mr. McSnagley." The Rev. McSnagley, in fact, made a strong point of Mliss's conversion, and, indirectly attributing to the

unfortunate child the suicide of her father, made affecting allusions in Sunday school to the beneficial effects of the "silent tomb," and in this cheerful contemplation drove most of the children into speechless horror, and caused the pink-and-white scions of the first families to howl dismally, and refuse to be comforted.

The long dry summer came. As each fierce day burned itself out in little whiffs of pearl grey smoke on the mountain summits, and the up-springing breeze scattered its red embers over the landscape, the green wave which in early spring upheaved above Smith's grave grew sere, and dry, and hard. In those days the master, strolling in the little churchyard of a Sabbath afternoon, was sometimes surprised to find a few wild flowers plucked from the damp pine-forests scattered there, and oftener rude wreaths hung upon the pine cross. Most of these wreaths were formed of a sweet-scented grass, which the children loved to keep in their desks, intertwined with the plumes of the buckeye, the syringa, and the wood-anemone; and here and there the master noticed the dark blue cowl of the monk's-hood or deadly aconite. There was something in the odd association of this noxious plant with these memorials which occasioned a painful sensation to the master, deeper than his æsthetic sense. One day, during a long walk, in crossing a wooded ridge he came upon Mliss in the heart of the forest, perched upon a prostrate pine, on a fantastic throne formed by the hanging plumes of lifeless branches, her lap full of grasses and pine-burrs, and crooning to herself one of the negro melodies of her younger life.

Recognising him at a distance, she made room for him on her elevated throne, and with a grave assumption of hospitality and patronage that would have been ridiculous had it not been so terribly earnest, she fed him with pine-nuts and crab-apples. The master took that opportunity to point out to her the noxious and deadly qualities of the monk's-hood, whose dark blossoms he saw in her lap, and extorted from her a promise not to meddle with it as long as she remained his pupil. This done—as the master had tested her integrity before—he rested satisfied, and the strange feeling which had overcome him on seeing them died away.

Of the homes that were offered Mliss when her conversion became known, the master preferred that of Mrs. Morpher, a womanly and kind-hearted specimen of South-western efflorescence, known in her maidenhood as the "Per-rairie Rose." Being one of those who contend resolutely against their own natures, Mrs. Morpher, by a long series of self-sacrifices and struggles, had at last subjugated her naturally careless disposition to principles of "order," which she considered, in common with Mr. Pope, as "Heaven's first law." But she could not entirely govern the orbits of her satellites, however regular her movements, and even her own "Jeemes" sometimes collided with her. Again her old nature asserted itself in her children. Lycurgus dipped into the cupboard "between meals," and Aristides came home from school without shoes, leaving those important articles on the threshold for the delight of a barefooted walk down the ditches. Octavia and Cassandra were "keerless" of their clothes. So with but one exception, however much the "Prairie Rose" might have trimmed and pruned and trained her own matured luxuriance, the little shoots came up defiantly wild and straggling. That one exception was Clytemnestra Morpher, aged fifteen. She was the realisation of her mother's immaculate conception,—neat, orderly, and dull.

¶

IT was an amiable weakness of Mrs. Morpher to imagine that "Clytie" was a consolation and model for Mliss. Following this fallacy, Mrs. Morpher threw Clytie at the head of Mliss when she was "bad," and set her up before the child for adoration in her penitential moments. It was not, therefore, surprising to the master to hear that Clytie was coming to school, obviously as a favour to the master, and as an example for Mliss and others. For "Clytie" was quite a young lady. Inheriting her mother's physical peculiarities, and in obedience to the climatic laws of the Red Mountain region, she was an early bloomer. The youth of Smith's Pocket, to whom this kind of flower was rare, sighed for her in April and languished in May. Enamoured swains haunted the school-house at the hour of dismissal. A few were jealous of the master.

Perhaps it was this latter circumstance that opened the master's eyes to another. He could not help noticing that Clytie was romantic; that in school she required a great deal of attention; that her pens were

uniformly bad and wanted fixing; that she usually accompanied the request with a certain expectation in her eye that was somewhat disproportionate to the quality of service she verbally required; that she sometimes allowed the curves of a round, plump white arm to rest on his when he was writing her copies; that she always blushed and flung back her blonde curls when she did so. I don't remember whether I have stated that the master was a young man—it's of little consequence, however; he had been severely educated in the school in which Clytie was taking her first lesson, and, on the whole, withstood the flexible curves and factitious glance like the fine young Spartan that he was. Perhaps an insufficient quality of food may have tended to this asceticism. He generally avoided Clytie; but one evening, when she returned to the school-house after something she had forgotten, and did not find it until the master walked home with her, I hear that he endeavoured to make himself particularly agreeable—partly from the fact, I imagine, that his conduct was adding gall and bitterness to the already overcharged hearts of Clytemnestra's admirers.

¶

THE morning after this affecting episode Mliss did not come to school. Noon came, but not Mliss. Questioning Clytie on the subject, it appeared that they had left the school together, but the wilful Mliss had taken another road. The afternoon brought her not. In the evening the master called on Mrs. Morpher, whose motherly heart was really alarmed. Mr. Morpher had spent all day in search of her, without discovering a trace.

Aristides was summoned as a probable accomplice, but that equitable infant succeeded in impressing the household with his innocence. Mrs. Morpher entertained a vivid impression that the child would yet be found drowned in a ditch, or, what was almost as terrible, muddied and soiled beyond the redemption of soap and water. Sick at heart, the master returned to the school-house. As he lit his lamp and seated himself at his desk, he found a note lying before him addressed to himself, in Mliss's handwriting. It seemed to be written on a leaf torn from some old memorandum book, and, to prevent sacrilegious trifling, had been sealed with six broken wafers. Opening it almost tenderly, the master read as follows:—

> RESPECTED SIR,—When you read this, I am run away. Never to come back. *Never*, NEVER, NEVER. You can give my beeds to Mary Jennings, and my Amerika's Pride (a highly coloured lithograph from a tobacco-box) to Sally Flanders. But don't you give anything to Clytie Morpher. Don't you dare to. Do you know what my oppinion is of her, it is this, she is perfekly disgustin. This is all and no more at present from
>
> Yours respectfully,
>
> MELISSA SMITH.

The master sat pondering on this strange epistle till the moon lifted its bright face above the distant hills, and illuminated the trail that led to the school-house, beaten quite hard with the coming and going of little feet. Then, more satisfied in mind, he tore the missive into fragments, and scattered them along the road.

At sunrise the next morning he was picking his way through the palm-like fern and thick under-brush of the pine-forest, starting the hare from its form, and awakening a querulous protest from a few dissipated crows, who had evidently been making a night of it, and so came to the wooded ridge where he had once found Mliss. There he found the prostrate pine and tasselled branches, but the throne was vacant. As he drew nearer, what might have been some frightened animal started through the crackling limbs. It ran up the tossed arms of the fallen monarch, and sheltered itself in some friendly foliage. The master, reaching the old seat, found the nest still warm; looking up in the intertwining branches, he met the black eyes of the errant Mliss. They gazed at each other without speaking. She was first to break the silence.

"What do you want?" she asked, curtly.

The master had decided on a course of action.

"I want some crab-apples," he said, humbly.

"Shan't have 'em! go away. Why don't you get 'em of Clytemnerestera?" (It seemed to be a relief to Mliss to express her contempt in additional syllables to that classical young woman's already long-drawn title.) "O, you wicked thing!"

"I am hungry, Lissy. I have eaten nothing since dinner yesterday. I am famished!" and the young man, in a state of remarkable exhaustion, leaned against a tree.

Melissa's heart was touched. In the

bitter days of her gipsy life she had known the sensation he so artfully simulated. Overcome by his heart-broken tone, but not entirely divested of suspicion, she said—

"Dig under the tree near the roots, and you'll find lots; but mind you don't tell;" for Mliss had *her* hoards as well as the rats and squirrels.

But the master, of course, was unable to find them, the effects of hunger probably blinding his senses. Mliss grew uneasy. At length she peered at him through the leaves in an elfish way, and questioned:—

"If I come down and give you some, you'll promise you won't touch me?"

The master promised.

"Hope you'll die if you do!"

The master accepted instant dissolution as a forfeit. Mliss slid down the tree. For a few moments nothing transpired but the munching of the pine-nuts.

"Do you feel better?" she asked, with some solicitude. The master confessed to a recuperated feeling, and then, gravely thanking her, proceeded to retrace his steps. As he expected, he had not gone far before she called him. He turned. She was standing there quite white, with tears in her widely-opened orbs. The master felt that the right moment had come. Going up to her, he took both her hands, and, looking in her tearful eyes, said gravely, "Lissy, do you remember the first evening you came to see me?"

Lissy remembered.

"You asked me if you might come to school, for you wanted to learn something and be better, and I said——"

"Come," responded the child, promptly.

"What would *you* say if the master now came to you and said that he was lonely without his little scholar, and that he wanted her to come and teach him to be better?"

The child hung her head for a few moments in silence. The master waited patiently. Tempted by the quiet, a hare ran close to the couple, and, raising her bright eyes and velvet fore-paws, sat and gazed at them. A squirrel ran half-way down the furrowed bark of the fallen tree, and there stopped.

"We are waiting, Lissy," said the master, in a whisper, and the child smiled. Stirred by a passing breeze, the tree-tops rocked, and a long pencil of light stole through their interlaced boughs full on the doubting face and irresolute little figure. Suddenly she took the master's hand in her quick way. What she said was scarcely audible, but the master, putting the black hair back from her forehead, kissed her; and so, hand in hand, they passed out of the damp aisles and forest odours into the open sunlit road.

III

SOMEWHAT less spiteful in her intercourse with other scholars, Mliss still retained an offensive attitude in regard to Clytemnestra. Perhaps the jealous element was not entirely lulled in her passionate little breast. Perhaps it was only that the round curves and plump outline offered more extended pinching surface. But while such ebullitions were under the master's control, her enmity occasionally took a new and irrepressible form.

The master, in his first estimate of the child's character, could not conceive that she had ever possessed a doll. But the master, like many other professed readers of character, was safer in *à posteriori* than *à priori* reasoning. Mliss had a doll, but then it was emphatically Mliss's doll—a smaller copy of herself. Its unhappy existence had been a secret discovered accidentally by Mrs. Morpher. It had been the old-time companion of Mliss's wanderings, and bore evident marks of suffering. Its original complexion was long since washed away by the weather and anointed by the slime of ditches. It looked very much as Mliss had in days past. Its one gown of faded stuff was dirty and ragged, as hers had been. Mliss had never been known to apply to it any childish term of endearment. She never exhibited it in the presence of other children. It was put severely to bed in a hollow tree near the school-house, and only allowed exercise during Mliss's rambles. Fulfilling a stern duty to her doll, as she would to herself, it knew no luxuries.

Now Mrs. Morpher, obeying a commendable impulse, bought another doll and gave it to Mliss. The child received it gravely and curiously. The master, on looking at it one day, fancied he saw a slight resemblance in its round red cheeks and mild blue eyes to Clytemnestra. It became evident before long that Mliss had also noticed the same resemblance. Accordingly she hammered its waxen head on the rocks when she was alone, and sometimes dragged it with a string round

its neck to and from school. At other times, setting it up on her desk, she made a pincushion of its patient and inoffensive body. Whether this was done in revenge of what she considered a second figurative obtrusion of Clytie's excellencies upon her, or whether she had an intuitive appreciation of the rites of certain other heathens, and, indulging in that " fetish " ceremony, imagined that the original of her wax model would pine away and finally die, is a metaphysical question I shall not now consider.

In spite of these moral vagaries, the master could not help noticing in her different tasks the working of a quick, restless, and vigorous perception. She knew neither the hesitancy nor the doubts of childhood. Her answers in class were always slightly dashed with audacity. Of course she was not infallible. But her courage and daring in passing beyond her own depth and that of the floundering little swimmers around her, in their minds outweighed all errors of judgment. Children are not better than grown people in this respect, I fancy; and whenever the little red hand flashed above her desk, there was a wondering silence, and even the master was sometimes oppressed with a doubt of his own experience and judgment.

Nevertheless, certain attributes which at first amused and entertained his fancy began to afflict him with grave doubts. He could not but see that Mliss was revengeful, irreverent, and wilful. That there was but one better quality which pertained to her semi-savage disposition—the faculty of physical fortitude and self-sacrifice; and another, though not always an attribute of the noble savage—Truth. Mliss was both fearless and sincere; perhaps in such a character the adjectives were synonymous.

¶

THE master had been doing some hard thinking on this subject, and had arrived at that conclusion quite common to all who think sincerely, that he was generally the slave of his own prejudices, when he determined to call on the Rev. McSnagley for advice. This decision was somewhat humiliating to his pride, as he and McSnagley were not friends. But he thought of Mliss and the evening of their first meeting; and perhaps, with a pardonable superstition that it was not chance alone that had guided her wilful feet to the school-house, and perhaps with a complacent consciousness of the rare magnanimity of the act, he choked back his dislike and went to McSnagley.

The reverend gentleman was glad to see him. Moreover, he observed that the master was looking " peartish," and hoped he had got over the " neuralgy " and " rheumatiz." He himself had been troubled with a dumb " ager " since last conference. But he had learned to " rastle and pray."

Pausing a moment to enable the master to write his certain method of curing the dumb " ager " upon the book and volume of his brain, Mr. McSnagley proceeded to inquire after Sister Morpher. " She is an adornment to Christ*ew*anity, and has a likely growin' young family," added Mr. McSnagley; " and there's that mannerly young gal—so well behaved—Miss Clytie." In fact, Clytie's perfections seemed to affect him to such an extent that he dwelt for several minutes upon them. The master was doubly embarrassed. In the first place, there was an enforced contrast with poor Mliss in all this praise of Clytie. Secondly, there was something unpleasantly confidential in his tone of speaking of Mrs. Morpher's earliest born. So that the master, after a few futile efforts to say something natural, found it convenient to recall another engagement, and left without asking the information required, but in his after reflections somewhat unjustly giving the Rev. Mr. Snagley the full benefit of having refused it.

Perhaps this rebuff placed the master and pupil once more in the close communion of old. The child seemed to notice the change in the master's manner, which had of late been constrained, and in one of their long post-prandial walks she stopped suddenly, and, mounting a stump, looked full in his face with big, searching eyes.

" You ain't mad? " said she, with an interrogative shake of the black braids.

" No."

" Nor bothered? "

" No."

" Nor hungry? " (Hunger was to Mliss a sickness that might attack a person at any moment.)

" No."

" Nor thinking of her? "

" Of whom, Lissy? "

" That white girl." (This was the latest epithet invented by Mliss, who was a very dark brunette, to express Clytemnestra.)

"No"

"Upon your word?" (A substitute for "Hope you'll die!" proposed by the master.)

"Yes."

"And sacred honour?"

"Yes."

Then Mliss gave him a fierce little kiss, and, hopping down, fluttered off. For two or three days after that she condescended to appear more like other children, and be, as she expressed it, "good."

Two years had passed since the master's advent at Smith's Pocket, and as his salary was not large, and the prospects of Smith's Pocket eventually becoming the capital of the State not entirely definite, he contemplated a change. He had informed the school trustees privately of his intentions, but educated young men of unblemished moral character being scarce at that time, he consented to continue his school term through the winter to early spring. None else knew of his intention except his one friend, a Dr. Duchesne, a young Creole physician, known to the people of Wingdam as "Duchesny." He never mentioned it to Mrs. Morpher, Clytie, or any of his scholars. His reticence was partly the result of a constitutional indisposition to fuss, partly a desire to be spared the questions and surmises of vulgar curiosity, and partly that he never really believed he was going to do anything before it was done.

He did not like to think of Mliss. It was a selfish instinct, perhaps, which made him try to fancy his feeling for the child was foolish, romantic, and unpractical. He even tried to imagine that she would do better under the control of an older and sterner teacher. Then she was nearly eleven, and in a few years, by the rules of Red Mountain, would be a woman. He had done his duty. After Smith's death he addressed letters to Smith's relatives, and received one answer from a sister of Melissa's mother. Thanking the master, she stated her intention of leaving the Atlantic States for California with her husband in a few months. This was a slight superstructure for the airy castle which the master pictured for Mliss's home, but it was easy to fancy that some loving, sympathetic woman, with the claims of kindred, might better guide her wayward nature. Yet, when the master had read the letter, Mliss listened to it carelessly, received it submissively, and afterwards cut figures out of it with her scissors, supposed to represent Clytemnestra, labelled "the white girl," to prevent mistakes, and impaled them upon the outer walls of the school-house.

When the summer was about spent, and the last harvest had been gathered in the valleys, the master bethought him of gathering in a few ripened shoots of the young idea, and of having his Harvest-Home, or Examination. So the savants and professionals of Smith's Pocket were gathered to witness that time-honoured custom of placing timid children in a constrained position, and bullying them as in a witness-box. As usual in such cases, the most audacious and self-possessed were the lucky recipients of the honours. The reader will imagine that in the present instance Mliss and Clytie were pre-eminent, and divided public attention: Mliss with her clearness of material perception and self-reliance, Clytie with her placid self-esteem and saint-like correctness of deportment. The other little ones were timid and blundering. Mliss's readiness and brilliancy, of course, captivated the greatest number and provoked the greatest applause. Mliss's antecedents had unconsciously awakened the strongest sympathies of a class whose athletic forms were ranged against the walls, or whose handsome bearded faces looked in at the windows. But Mliss's popularity was overthrown by an unexpected circumstance.

McSnagley had invited himself, and had been going through the pleasing entertainment of frightening the more timid pupils by the vaguest and most ambiguous questions, delivered in an impressive funereal tone; and Mliss had soared into Astronomy, and was tracking the course of our spotted ball through space, and keeping time with the music of the spheres, and defining the tethered orbits of the planets, when McSnagley impressively arose.

"Meelissy! ye were speaking of the revolutions of this yere yearth, and the move-*ments* of the sun, and I think ye said it had been a-doing of it since the creashun, eh?"

Mliss nodded a scornful affirmative.

"Well, war that the truth?" said McSnagley, folding his arms.

"Yes," said Mliss, shutting up her little red lips tightly.

The handsome outlines at the windows peered farther in the school-room, and a saintly Raphael-face, with blonde beard and soft blue eyes, belonging to the biggest

scamp in the diggings, turned towards the child and whispered, " Stick to it, Mliss ! "

The reverend gentleman heaved a deep sigh, and cast a compassionate glance at the master, then at the children, and then rested his look on Clytie. That young woman softly elevated her round white arm. Its seductive curves were enhanced by a gorgeous and massive specimen bracelet, the gift of one of her humblest worshippers, worn in honour of the occasion. There was a momentary silence. Clytie's round cheeks were very pink and soft. Clytie's big eyes were very bright and blue. Clytie's low-necked white book-muslin rested softly on Clytie's white, plump shoulders. Clytie looked at the master, and the master nodded. Then Clytie spoke softly—

" Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and it obeyed him ! " There was a low hum of applause in the school-room, a triumphant expression on McSnagley's face, a grave shadow on the master's, and a comical look of disappointment reflected from the windows. Mliss skimmed rapidly over her Astronomy, and then shut the book with a loud snap. A groan burst from McSnagley, an expression of astonishment from the school-room, a yell from the windows, as Mliss brought her red fist down on the desk, with the emphatic declaration :—

" It's a lie ! I don't believe it ! "

IV

THE long wet season had drawn near its close. Signs of spring were visible in the swelling buds and rushing torrents. The pine-forests exhaled the fresher spicery. The azaleas were already budding, the ceanothus getting ready its lilac livery for spring. On the green upland which climbed Red Mountain at its southern aspect, the long spike of the monk's-hood shot up from its broad-leaved stool, and once more shook its dark blue bells. Again the billow above Smith's grave was soft and green, its crest just tossed with the foam of daisies and buttercups. The little graveyard had gathered a few new dwellers in the past year, and the mounds were placed two by two by the little paling, until they reached Smith's grave, and there there was but one. General superstition had shunned it, and the plot beside Smith was vacant.

There had been several placards posted about the town, intimating that, at a certain period, a celebrated dramatic company would perform, for a few days, a series of " side-splitting " and " screaming farces " ; that, alternating pleasantly with this, there would be some melodrama, and a grand divertissement, which would include singing, dancing, &c. These announcements occasioned a great fluttering among the little folk, and were the theme of much excitement and great speculation among the master's scholars. The master had promised Mliss, to whom this sort of thing was sacred and rare, that she should go, and on that momentous evening the master and Mliss " assisted."

The performance was the prevalent style of heavy mediocrity ; the melodrama was not bad enough to laugh at, nor good enough to excite. But the master, turning wearily to the child, was astonished, and felt something like self-accusation, in noticing the peculiar effect of the play upon her excitable nature.

The red blood flushed in her cheeks at each stroke of her panting little heart. Her small, passionate lips were slightly parted, to give vent to her hurried breath. Her widely opened lids threw up and arched her black eyebrows. She did not laugh at the dismal comicalities of the funny man, for Mliss seldom laughed. Nor was she discreetly affected to the delicate extremes of the corner of a white handkerchief, as was the tender-hearted " Clytie," who was talking with her " feller," and ogling the master at the same moment.

But when the performance was over, and the green curtain fell on the little stage, Mliss drew a long deep breath, and turned to the master's grave face with a half-apologetic smile and wearied gesture. Then she said, " Now take me home ! " and dropped the lids of her black eyes, as if to dwell once more in fancy on the mimic stage.

On their way to Mrs. Morpher's, the master thought to ridicule the whole performance. Now, he shouldn't wonder if Mliss thought that the young lady who acted so beautifully was really in earnest, and in love with the gentleman who wore such fine clothes. Well, if she were in love with him, it was a very unfortunate thing ! " Why ? " said Mliss, with an upward sweep of the drooping lid. " Oh ! well, he couldn't support his wife at his present salary, and pay so much a week for his

fine clothes, and then they wouldn't receive as much wages if they were married as if they were merely lovers—that is," added the master, " if they are not already married to somebody else ; but I think the husband of the pretty young countess takes the tickets at the door, or pulls up the curtain, or snuffs the candles, or does something equally refined and elegant. As to the young man with nice clothes, which are really nice now, and must cost at least two and a half or three dollars, not to speak of that mantle of red drugget, which I happen to know the price of, for I bought some of it for my room once—as to this young man, Lissy, he is a pretty good fellow, and if he does drink occasionally, I don't think people ought to take advantage of it, and give him black eyes, and throw him in the mud. Do you ? I am sure he might owe me two dollars and a half a long time before I would throw it up in his face, as the fellow did the other night at Wingdam."

Mliss had taken his hand in both of hers, and was trying to look in his eyes, which the young man kept as resolutely averted. Mliss had a faint idea of irony, indulging herself sometimes in a species of sardonic humour, which was equally visible in her actions and her speech. But the young man continued in this strain until they had reached Mrs. Morpher's and he had deposited Mliss in her maternal charge. Waiving the invitation of Mrs. Morpher to refreshment and rest, and shading his eyes with his hand to keep out the blue-eyed Clytemnestra's siren glances, he excused himself, and went home.

¶

FOR two or three days after the advent of the dramatic company Mliss was late at school, and the master's usual Friday afternoon ramble was for once omitted, owing to the absence of his trustworthy guide. As he was putting away his books and preparing to leave the school-house, a small voice piped at his side, " Please sir ? " The master turned, and there stood Aristides Morpher.

" Well, my little man," said the master, impatiently, " what is it ? quick ! "

" Please, sir, me and ' Kerg ' thinks that Mliss is going to run away agin."

" What's that, sir ? " said the master, with that unjust testiness with which we always receive disagreeable news.

" Why, sir, she don't stay home any more, and ' Kerg ' and me see her talking with one of those actor fellers, and she's with him now ; and please, sir, yesterday she told ' Kerg ' and me she could make a speech as well as Miss Cellerstina Montmoressy, and she spouted right off by heart ; " and the little fellow paused in a collapsed condition.

" What actor ? " asked the master.

" Him as wears the shiny hat. And hair And gold pin. And gold chain," said the just Aristides, putting periods for commas to eke out his breath.

The master put on his gloves and hat, feeling an unpleasant tightness in his chest and thorax, and walked out in the road. Aristides trotted along by his side, endeavouring to keep pace with his short legs to the master's strides, when the master stopped suddenly, and Aristides bumped up against him. " Where were they talking ? " asked the master, as if continuing the conversation.

" At the Arcade," said Aristides.

When they reached the main street the master paused. " Run down home," said he to the boy. " If Mliss is there, come to the Arcade and tell me. If she isn't there, stay home ; run ! " And off trotted the short-legged Aristides.

The Arcade was just across the way—a long, rambling building, containing a bar-room, billiard-room, and restaurant. As the young man crossed the plaza he noticed that two or three of the passers-by turned and looked after him. He looked at his clothes, took out his handkerchief and wiped his face, before he entered the bar-room. It contained the usual number of loungers, who stared at him as he entered. One of them looked at him so fixedly, and with such a strange expression, that the master stopped and looked again, and then saw it was only his own reflection in a large mirror. This made the master think that perhaps he was a little excited, and so he took up a copy of the Red Mountain Banner from one of the tables, and tried to recover his composure by reading the column of advertisements.

He then walked through the bar-room, through the restaurant, and into the billiard-room. The child was not there. In the latter apartment a person was standing by one of the tables with a broad-brimmed glazed hat on his head. The master recognised him as the agent of the dramatic company ; he had taken a dislike to him at their first meeting, from the peculiar

fashion of wearing his beard and hair. Satisfied that the object of his search was not there, he turned to the man with a glazed hat. He had noticed the master, but tried that common trick of unconsciousness in which vulgar natures always fail. Balancing a billiard-cue in his hand, he pretended to play with a ball in the centre of the table. The master stood opposite to him until he raised his eyes; when their glances met, the master walked up to him.

He had intended to avoid a scene or quarrel, but when he began to speak, something kept rising in his throat and retarded his utterance, and his own voice frightened him, it sounded so distant, low, and resonant. "I understand," he began, "that Melissa Smith, an orphan, and one of my scholars, has talked with you about adopting your profession. Is that so?"

The man with the glazed hat leaned over the table, and made an imaginary shot, that sent the ball spinning round the cushions, then walking round the table, he recovered the ball, and placed it upon the spot. This duty discharged, getting ready for another shot, he said—

"S'pose she has?"

The master choked up again, but squeezing the cushion of the table in his gloved hand, he went on—

"If you are a gentleman, I have only to tell you that I am her guardian, and responsible for her career. You know as well as I do the kind of life you offer her. As you may learn of any one here, I have already brought her out of an existence worse than death—out of the streets and the contamination of vice. I am trying to do so again. Let us talk like men. She has neither father, mother, sister, nor brother. Are you seeking to give her an equivalent for these?"

¶

THE man with the glazed hat examined the point of his cue, and then looked around for somebody to enjoy the joke with him.

"I know that she is a strange, wilful girl," continued the master, "but she is better than she was. I believe that I have some influence over her still. I beg and hope, therefore, that you will take no further steps in this matter, but as a man, as a gentleman, leave her to me. I am willing——" But here something rose again in the master's throat, and the sentence remained unfinished.

The man with the glazed hat, mistaking the master's silence, raised his head with a coarse, brutal laugh, and said in a loud voice—

"Want her yourself, do you? That cock won't fight here, young man!"

The insult was more in the tone than the words, more in the glance than tone, and more in the man's instinctive nature than all these. The best appreciable rhetoric to this kind of animal is a blow. The master felt this, and, with his pent-up nervous energy finding expression in the one act, he struck the brute full in his grinning face. The blow sent the glazed hat one way and the cue another, and tore the glove and skin from the master's hand from knuckle to joint. It opened up the corners of the fellow's mouth, and spoilt the peculiar shape of his beard for some considerable time to come.

There was a shout, an imprecation, a scuffle, and the trampling of many feet. Then the crowd parted right and left, and two sharp quick reports followed each other in rapid succession. Then they closed again about his opponent, and the master was standing alone. He remembered picking bits of burning wadding from his coat-sleeve with his left hand. Someone was holding his other hand. Looking at it, he saw it was still bleeding from the blow, but his fingers were clenched around the handle of a glittering knife. He could not remember when or how he got it.

The man who was holding his hand was Mr. Morpher. He hurried the master to the door, but the master held back, and tried to tell him as well as he could with his parched throat about "Mliss." "It's all right, my boy," said Mr. Morpher. "She's home!" And they passed out into the street together.

As they walked along Mr. Morpher said that Mliss had come running into the house a few moments before, and had dragged him out, saying that somebody was trying to kill the master at the Arcade. Wishing to be alone, the master promised Mr. Morpher that he would not seek the agent again that night, and parted from him, taking the road toward the school-house. He was surprised in nearing it to find the door open—still more surprised to find Mliss sitting there.

The master's nature, as I have hinted before, had, like most sensitive organisations, a selfish basis. The brutal taunt thrown

out by his late adversary still rankled in his heart. It was possible, he thought, that such a construction might be put upon his affection for the child, which at best was foolish and Quixotic. Besides, had she not voluntarily abnegated his authority and affection? And what had everybody else said about her? Why should he alone combat the opinion of all, and be at last obliged tacitly to confess the truth of all they had predicted? And he had been a participant in a low bar-room fight with a common boor, and risked his life to prove what? What had he proved? Nothing. What would the people say? What would his friends say? What would McSnagley say?

In his self-accusation the last person he should have wished to meet was Mliss. He entered the door, and, going up to his desk, told the child, in a few cold words, that he was busy, and wished to be alone. As she rose, he took her vacant seat, and, sitting down, buried his head in his hands. When he looked up again she was still standing there. She was looking at his face with an anxious expression.

"Did you kill him?" she asked.

"No!" said the master.

"That's what I gave you the knife for!" said the child, quickly.

"Gave me the knife!" repeated the master, in bewilderment.

"Yes, gave you the knife. I was there under the bar. Saw you hit him; saw you both fall. He dropped his old knife. I gave it to you. Why didn't you stick him?" said Mliss, rapidly, with an expressive twinkle of the black eyes and a gesture of the little red hand.

The master could only look his astonishment.

"Yes," said Mliss. "If you'd asked me, I'd told you I was off with the play-actors. Why was I off with the play-actors? Because you wouldn't tell me you was going away. I knew it. I heard you tell the Doctor so. I wasn't a goin' to stay here alone with those Morphers. I'd rather die first."

With a dramatic gesture which was perfectly consistent with her character, she drew from her bosom a few limp green leaves, and, holding them out at arm's-length, said in her quick vivid way, and in the queer pronunciation of her old life, which she fell into when unduly excited—

"That's the poison plant you said would kill me. I'll go with the play-actors, or I'll eat this and die here. I don't care which. I won't stay here, where they hate and despise me! Neither would you let me, if you didn't hate and despise me, too!"

The passionate little breast heaved, and two big tears peeped over the edge of Mliss's eyelids, but she whisked them away with the corner of her apron as if they had been wasps.

"If you lock me up in jail," said Mliss, fiercely, "to keep me from the play-actors, I'll poison myself. Father killed himself—why shouldn't I? You said a mouthful of that root would kill me, and I always carry it here, and she struck her breast with her clenched fist.

The master thought of the vacant plot beside Smith's grave, and of the passionate little figure before him. Seizing her hands in his, and looking full into her truthful eyes, he said—

"Lissy, will you go with me?"

The child put her arms around his neck, and said joyfully, "Yes."

"But now—to-night?"

"To-night."

And hand in hand they passed into the road—the narrow road that had once brought her weary feet to the master's door, and which it seemed she should not tread again alone. The stars glittered brightly above them. For good or ill, the lesson had been learned, and behind them the school of Red Mountain closed upon them for ever.

(Another Great Love Story will appear in next month's "ARGOSY")

The Ascot Tragedy

Mr. Fortune investigates an "Arabian Night" mystery

By H. C. BAILEY

THAT is what it would have been called in the evening papers if they had known all about it. They did not. They made the most of the mystery, you remember; it was not good for them or you to know that the sequel was a sequel. But there is no reason why the flats should not be joined now.

So let us begin at Ascot on the morning of that Cup Day. One of our fine summers, the course rather yellow, the lawns rather brown, a haze of heat over the distant woodland, and sunshine flaming about the flounces and silk hats. There were already many of both in the Royal Enclosure (it was a year of flounces), and among them, dapper, debonair, everybody's friend, the youngest middle-aged man in Europe. He, of course, is the Hon. Sidney Lomas, the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, though mistaken by some outsiders for a comic actor of fame. Tripping back from a joke with the stewards, he discovered, sprawling solitary on the end of one of the seats, Mr. Fortune, the adviser of him and all other official and important people when surgery, medicine or kindred sciences can elucidate what is or is not crime. No one looks more prosperous than Reginald Fortune. He is plump and pinkly healthy, he and his tailor treat each other with respect, his countenance has the amiability of a nice boy.

But on this occasion Lomas found fault with him. "Why, Fortune, you're very pensive. Have you lost the lady of your present affections? Or backed a wrong 'un?"

"Go away. No fellow has a right to be as cool as you look. Go quite away. I feel like the three fellows in the Bible who sang in the furnace. How can you jest, Lomas? I have no affections. I cannot love, to bet I am ashamed. I always win. Half-crowns. Why is the world thus, Lomas?"

"My dear fellow, you're not yourself. You look quite professional."

Reggie Fortune groaned. "I am. This place worries me. I am anatomical, ethnological, anthropological."

"Good Gad," said Lomas.

"Yes. A distressing place, look at it"; he waved a stick.

The people in the Royal Enclosure were as pleasant to behold as usual. Comely girls and women who had been comely passed in frocks of which many were pretty and few garish; their men were of a blameless, inconspicuous uniformity.

"What is he?" said Reggie Fortune. "I ask you. Look at his feet."

What Lomas saw was a man dressed like all the rest of them and as well set up, but of a darker complexion. He did not see anything remarkable. "The big fellow?" he said. "He is a little weak at the knee. But what's the matter with him?"

"Who is he?" said Reggie Fortune.

Lomas shrugged. "Not English, of course. Rather a half-caste colour, isn't he? From one of the smaller legations, I suppose, Balkan or South American." He waved a hand to some elegant aliens who were at that moment kissing ladies' hands with florid grace. "They all come here, you know."

"I don't know," said Reggie Fortune peevishly. "Half-caste? Half what caste? Look at his feet." Now the man's feet, well displayed beneath white spats, were large and flat but distinguished by their heels, which stuck out behind extravagantly. "That is the negro heel."

"My dear Fortune! The fellow is no more a negro than I am," Lomas protested: and indeed the man's hair was straight and sleek and he had a good enough nose, and he was far from black.

"The negro or Hamitic heel," Reggie Fortune drowsily persisted. "I suspect the Hamitic or negro leg. And otherwise up above. And it's all very distressing, Lomas."

"An Egyptian or perhaps an Arab:

probably a Foreign Office pet," Lomas consoled him. " That would get him into the Royal Enclosure."

Lomas was then removed by a duchess and Reggie Fortune tilted his hat still farther over his eyes and pondered whether it would be wise to drink before lunch and was dreamily aware of other people on his seat, an old man darkly tanned and soldierly in the custody of a little woman brilliantly dressed and terribly vivacious. She chattered without a pause, she made eyes, she made affectionate movements and little caresses. The old man though helpless seemed to be thinking of something else. And Reggie Fortune sketched lower and still lower estimates of human nature.

They went away at last when everybody went away to gather in a crowd at the gates and along the railings for the coming of the King. You will please to observe that the time must have been about one o'clock.

Reggie Fortune, one of the few, remained on his seat. He heard the cheering down the course and had sufficient presence of mind to stand up and take off his hat as the distant band began to play. Over the heads of the crowd he saw the red coats of the postilions and a gleam of the grey of the team as the King's carriage swept round into the enclosure. The rest of the procession passed and the crowd melted away. But one man remained by the railings alone. He was tall and thin and he leaned limply against the railings, one arm hanging over them. After a little while he turned on his heel and fell in a heap.

Two of the green-coated wardens of the gate ran up to him. " Oh, Lord," Reggie Fortune groaned, " why did I be a doctor?" But before he could get through the flurry of people the man was being carried away.

The gift of Lomas for arriving where he wants to be displayed itself. Lomas slid through the crowd and took his arm, " Stout fellow ! Come along. It's Sir Arthur Dean. Touch of sun, what ? "

" Arthur Dean ? That's the Persia man, the pundit on the Middle East ? "

" That's the fellow. Getting old, you know. One of the best."

Into the room where the old man lay came the shouting over the first race. By the door Lomas and an inspector of police talked in low tones, glancing now and then at Reggie, who was busy.

" Merry Man ! Merry Man ! Merry Man ! " the crowd roared outside.

Reggie straightened his bent back and stood looking down at his patient. Lomas came forward. " Anything we can get you, Fortune ? Would you like some assistance ? "

" You can't assist him," said Reggie. " He's dead."

" Merry Man ! " the crowd triumphed. " Merry Man ! "

" Good Gad ! " said Lomas. " Poor fellow. One of the best. Well, well, what is it ? Heart failure ? "

" The heart generally fails when you die," Reggie mumbled : he still stared down at the body and the wonted benignity of his face was lost in expressionless reserve. " Do you know if he has any people down here ? "

" It's possible. There is a married son. I'll have him looked for." Lomas sent his inspector off.

" I saw the old man with a woman just before he died," Reggie murmured, and Lomas put up his eyeglass.

" Did you though ? Very sudden, wasn't it ? And he was all alone when he died."

" When he fell," Reggie mumbled the correction. " Yes, highly sudden."

" What was the cause of death, Fortune?"

" I wonder," Reggie muttered. He went down on his knees by the body, he looked long and closely into the eyes, he opened the clothes . . . and to the eyes he came back again. Then there was a tap at the door and Lomas having conferred there came back and said, " The son and his wife. I'll tell them. I suppose they can see the body ? "

" They'd better see the body," said Reggie, and as Lomas went out he began to cover and arrange it. He was laying the right arm by the side when he checked and held it up to the light. On the back of the hand was a tiny drop of blood and a red smear. He looked close and found such a hole as a pin might make.

From the room outside came a woman's cry, then a deep man's voice in some agitation, and Lomas opened the door. " This is Mr. Fortune, the surgeon who was with your father at once. Major Dean and Mrs. Dean, Fortune."

Reggie bowed and studied them. The man was a soldierly fellow, with his father's keen, wary face. But it was the woman Reggie watched, the woman who was saying, " I was with him only half an hour ago," and twisting her hands nervously.

"Most of that half-hour he has been dead. Where did you leave him, madam?" Reggie said.

Husband and wife stared at him. "Why, in the Royal Enclosure, of course. In the crowd when the King came. I—I lost him. Somebody spoke to me. Yes, it was Sybil. And I never saw him again."

Reggie stepped aside from the body. She shuddered and hid her face in her hands. "His eyes—his eyes," she murmured.

Major Dean blew his nose. "This rather knocks one over," he said. "What's the cause of death, sir?"

"Can you help me?" said Reggie.

"I? What do you mean?"

"Nothing wrong with his heart, was there?"

"Never heard of it. He didn't use doctors. Never was ill."

Reggie stroked his chin. "I suppose he hadn't been to an oculist lately?"

"Not he. His eyes were as good as mine. Wonderful good. He used to brag of it. He was rising seventy and no glasses. Good Lord, what's that got to do with it? I want to know why he died."

"So do I. And I can't tell you," said Reggie.

"What? I say—what? You mean a post-mortem. That's horrible."

"My dear Major, it is most distressing," Lomas purred. "I assure you anything in our power—sympathize with your feelings, quite, quite. But the Coroner would insist, you know; we have no choice."

"As you were saying," Reggie chimed in, "we want to know why he died."

Major Dean drew a long breath. "That's all right, that's all right," he said. "The old dad!" and he came to his father's side and knelt down, and his wife stood by him, her hand on his shoulder. He looked a moment into the dead face, and closed the eyes and looked long.

¶

FROM this scene Reggie and Lomas drew back. In the silence they heard the man and woman breathing unsteadily. Lomas sighed his sympathy. Mrs. Dean whispered, "His mouth! Oh, Claude, his mouth!" and with a sudden darting movement wiped away some froth from the pale lips. Then she too knelt and she kissed the brow. Her husband lifted the dead right hand to hold it for a while. And then he reached across to the key chain, took off the keys, slipped them into his pocket and helped his wife to her feet.

Reggie turned a still expressionless face on Lomas. Lomas still exhibited grave official sorrow.

"Well—er—thanks very much for all you've done," Major Dean addressed them both. "You've been very kind. We feel that. And if you will let me know as soon as you know anything—rather a relief."

"Quite, quite." Lomas held out his hand; Major Dean took it. "Yes, I'm so sorry, but you see we must take charge of everything for the present." He let the Major's hand go and still held out his own.

Dean flushed. "What, his keys?"

"Thank you," said Lomas, and at last received them.

"I was thinking about his papers, you know."

"I can promise you they'll be safe."

"Oh, well, that settles it!" Dean laughed. "You know where to find me," and he took his wife, who was plainly eager to speak to him, away.

Lomas dangled the keys in his hand. "I wonder what's in their minds? And what's in yours, Fortune?"

"Man was murdered," said Reggie.

Lomas groaned, "I was afraid you had that for me. But surely it's not possible?"

"It ought not to be," Reggie admitted. "At a quarter to one he was quite alive, rather bored perhaps, but as fit as me. At a quarter past he was dead. What happened in between?"

"Why, he was in sight the whole time——"

"All among the most respectable people in England. Yet he dies suddenly of asphyxia and heart failure. Why?"

"Well, some obscure heart trouble——" Lomas protested.

"He was in the pink. He never used doctors. You heard them say so. He hadn't even been to an oculist."

"A fellow doesn't always know," Lomas urged. "There are all sorts of heart weakness."

"Not this sort." Reggie shook his head. "And the eyes. Did you see how those two were afraid of his eyes? Your eyes won't look like that when you die of heart failure. They might if an oculist had put belladonna in 'em to examine you. But there was no oculist. Dilated pupils, foam at the mouth, cold flesh. He was poisoned. It might

have been aconitine. But aconitine don't kill so quick or quite so quiet."

"What is aconitine?"

"Oh, wolf-bane. Blue-rocket. You can get it from other plants. Only this is too quick. It slew him like prussic acid and much more peacefully. Some alkaloid poison of the aconite family, possibly unclassified. Probably it was put into him by that fresh puncture in his hand while he was packed in the crowd, just a scratch, just a jab with a hollow needle. An easy murder if you could trust your stuff. And when we do the post-mortem we'll find that everything points to death by a poison we can't trace."

"Thanks, so much," said Lomas. "It is for this we employ experts."

"Well, the police also must earn their bread. Who is he?"

"He was the great authority on the Middle East. Old Indian civilian long retired. Lately political adviser to the Government of Media. You know all that."

"Yes. Who wanted him dead?" said Reggie.

"Oh, my dear fellow!" Lomas spread out his hands. "The world is wide."

"Yes. The world also is very evil. The time also is waxing late. Same like the hymn says. What about those papers son and co. were so keen on?"

Lomas laughed. "If you could believe I have a little intelligence, it would so soothe me. Our people have been warned to take charge of his flat."

"Active fellow. Let's go and see what they found."

¶

IT was not much more than an hour before a policeman was letting them into Sir Arthur Dean's flat in Westminster. An inspector of police led the way to the study. "Anything of interest, Morton?" Lomas said.

"Well, sir, nothing you could call out of the way. When we came, the servants had heard of the death and they were upset. Sir Arthur's man, he opened the door to me fairly crying. Been with him thirty years, fine old-fashioned fellow, would be talking about his master."

Lomas and Reggie looked at each other, but the inspector swept on.

"Then in this room, sir, there was Sir Arthur's executor, Colonel Osbert, getting out papers. I had to tell him that wouldn't do. Rather stiff he was. He is a military man. Well, sir, I put it to him, orders are orders, and he took it very well, but he let me see pretty plain he didn't like it. He was quite the gentleman, but he put it to me we had no business in Sir Arthur's affairs unless we thought there was foul play. Well, of course, I couldn't answer that. He talked a good deal, fishing, you might say. All he got out of me was that I couldn't allow anything to be touched. So he said he would take it up with the Commissioner and went off. That's all, sir."

"Who is he?" said Reggie.

"His card, sir. Colonel Osbert, late Indian Army."

"Do you know if he was who he said he was?" Lomas asked.

The inspector was startled. "Well, sir, the servants knew him. Sir Arthur's man, he let him in, says he's Sir Arthur's oldest friend. I had no reason to detain him."

"That's all right, Morton," said Lomas. "Well, what time did you get here?"

"Your message came two o'clock, sir. I should say we were here by a quarter past."

Lomas nodded and dismissed him. "Quick work," he said with a cock of his eye at Reggie. "We can time it all by the King. He drove up the course at ten past one. Till the procession came Sir Arthur was alive. We didn't pick him up till five minutes after, at the least. No one knew he was dead till you had examined him. No one knew then but me and my men. And yet Colonel Osbert in London knows of the death in time to get round here and get to work on the dead man's papers before two-fifteen. He knew the man was dead as soon as we did who were looking at the body. Damme, he has very early information."

"Yes. One to you, Lomas. And a nasty one for Colonel Osbert. Our active and intelligent police force. If you hadn't been up and doing and sent your bright boys round, Colonel Osbert might have got away with what he wanted. And he wouldn't have had to explain how he knew too much."

"When was the poison given? Say between five to one and ten past. At that time the murderer was in the Royal Enclosure. If he had his car waiting handy, could he get here before two-fifteen?"

"Well—if his car was a flier, and there were no flies on his chauffeur and he had luck all the way, I suppose it's possible.

But I don't believe in it. I should say Osbert didn't do the job."

Lomas sprang up and called the inspector. He wanted to know what Colonel Osbert was wearing. Colonel Osbert was in a lounge suit of grey flannel. Lomas sat down again and lit a cigarette. "I'm afraid that will do for an alibi, Fortune," he sighed. "Your hypothetical murderer was in the Royal Enclosure. Therefore——"

"He was in topper and tails, same like us. The uniform of respectability. Of course, he could have done a change in his car. But I don't think it. No. Osbert won't do. But what was he after?"

Lomas stood up and looked round the room. It had the ordinary furniture of an old-fashioned study and in addition several modern steel chests of drawers for filing documents. "Well, he set some value on his papers," Lomas said.

"Lots of honest toil before you, Lomas, old thing." Reggie smiled, and while Lomas fell to work with the keys he wandered about the room picking up a bowl here, a brass tray there. "He kept to his own line," he remarked. "Everything is Asiatic."

"You may well say so," Lomas groaned, frowning over a mass of papers.

But Reggie's attention was suddenly diverted. Somebody had rung the bell and there was talk in the hall. He made out a woman's voice. "I fancy this is our young friend the daughter-in-law," he murmured.

Lomas looked up at him. "I had a notion you didn't take to her, Fortune. Do you want to see her?"

"God forbid," said Reggie. "She's thin, Lomas, she's too thin."

In a moment or two a discreet tap introduced Inspector Morton. "Mrs. Dean, deceased's daughter-in-law, sir," he reported. "Asked to see the manservant. I saw no objection, me being present. They were both much distressed, sir. She asked him if Colonel Osbert had been here. Seemed upset when she heard he was here before us. Asked if he had taken anything away. The servant told her we weren't letting anything be touched. That didn't seem to satisfy her. She said something nasty about the police being always too late. Meant for me, I suppose."

"I rather fancy it was meant for me," said Reggie. "It's a bad business."

"I don't think the Colonel got away with anything, sir. He was sitting down to the diary on the table there when we came in."

"All right." Lomas waved him away. "Damme, it is a bad business. What am I to do with this, Fortune?" He held up papers in a strange script, papers of all sorts and sizes, some torn and discoloured, some fresh.

Reggie went to look. "Arabic," he said. "And this is Persian." He studied them for a while. "A sort of dossier, a lot of evidence about some case or person. Lomas old thing, you'll have to call in the Foreign Office."

"Lord, we can translate them ourselves. It's the mass of it!"

"Yes, lot of light reading. I think I should have a talk to the Foreign Office. Well, that's your show. Me for the body."

Lomas lay back in his chair. "What's in your head?"

"I won't let anything into my head. There is no evidence. But I'm wondering if we'll ever get any. It's a beautiful crime—as a crime. A wicked world, Lomas old thing."

¶

ON the day after, Reggie Fortune came into Lomas's room at Scotland Yard and shook his head and lit one of Lomas's largest cigars and fell into a chair. "Unsatisfactory, highly unsatisfactory," he announced. "I took Harvey down with me. You couldn't have a better opinion except mine, and he agrees with me."

"And what do you say?"

"I say, nothing doing. He had no medical history. There was nothing the matter with the man, yet he died of heart failure and suffocation. That means poisoning by aconitine or a similar alkaloid. But there is no poison in the price list which would in a quarter of an hour kill quietly and without fuss a man in perfect health. I have no doubt a poison was injected into him by that puncture on the hand, but I don't know what it was. We'll have some analysis done, of course, but I expect nothing of that. There'll be no trace."

"Unique case."

"I wouldn't say that. You remember I thought General Blaker was poisoned. He was mixed up with Asiatics too. There were queer circumstances about the death of that Greek millionaire in Rome two years

ago. The world's old and men have been poisoning each other for five thousand years and science only began to look into it yesterday. There's a lot of drugs in the world that you can't buy at the chemist's."

"Good Gad," Lomas protested, "we're in Scotland Yard, not the 'Arabian Nights.' What you mean is you can't do anything?"

"Even so. Can you? Who wanted him dead?"

"Nobody but a lunatic. He had no money to leave. He was on the best terms with his son. He was a popular old boy, never had an enemy. He had no secrets—most respectable—lived all his life in public."

"And yet his son snatched at his keys before he was cold. And his dear old friend Osbert knew of his death before he was dead and made a bee-line for his papers. By the way, what was in his papers?"

Lomas shrugged. "Our fellows are working at 'em."

"And who is Osbert?"

"Well, you know, he's coming to see me. He put in his protest to the Commissioner, and they were going to turn him down, of course. But I thought I'd like to listen to Colonel Osbert."

"Me too," said Reggie.

"By all means, my dear fellow. But he seems quite genuine. He is the executor. He is an old friend, about the oldest living. Not a spot on his record. Long Indian service."

"Only son and daughter don't seem to trust him. Only he also is a bit Asiatic."

"Oh, my dear Fortune—" Lomas was protesting when Colonel Osbert came.

You will find a hundred men like him on any day in the service clubs. He was small and brown and neat, even dapper, but a trifle stiff in the joints. His manner of speech was a drawl, concluding with a bark.

Reggie lay back in his chair and admired the bland fluency with which Lomas said nothing in reply to the parade-ground demands of Colonel Osbert. Colonel Osbert wanted to know (if we may reduce many sentences to one) what Lomas meant by refusing him possession of Sir Arthur Dean's papers. And Lomas continued to reply that he meant nothing in particular.

"Sudden death at Ascot—in the Royal Enclosure too," he explained. "That's very startling and conspicuous. The poor fellow hadn't been ill, as far as we can learn. Naturally we have to seek for any explanation."

So at last Osbert came out with: "What, sir, you don't mean to say, sir—suspect foul play?"

"Oh, my dear Colonel, you wouldn't suggest that?"

"I, sir? Never entered my head. Poor dear Arthur! A shock, sir. A blow! Getting old, of course, like the rest of us."

"Ah, had he been failing?" said Reggie sympathetically.

"Well, well, well. We none of us grow younger, sir." Colonel Osbert shook his head. "But upon my soul, Mr. Lomas, I don't understand the action of your department."

"I'm so sorry you should say that," Lomas sighed. "Now I wonder if you have particular reason for wanting Sir Arthur's papers at once?"

"My good sir, I am his executor. It's my duty to take charge of his papers."

"Quite, quite. Well, they're all safe, you know. His death must have been a great shock to you, Colonel."

"Shock, sir? A blow, a blow. Poor dear Arthur!"

"Yes, too bad," Lomas mourned: and voice and face were all kindly innocence as he babbled on: "I suppose you heard about it from his son?"

Colonel Osbert paused to clear his throat. Colonel Osbert stopped that one. "Major Dean? No, sir. No. Point of fact, I don't know who the fellow was. Some fellow called me up on the 'phone and told me poor dear Arthur had fallen down dead on the course. Upon my soul, I was knocked over, absolutely knocked over. When I came to myself I rushed round to secure his papers."

"Why, did you think somebody would be after them?"

"My dear sir!" Colonel Osbert protested. "Really, now really. It was my duty. Arthur was always very strict with his papers. I thought of his wishes."

"Quite, quite," Lomas purred, and artless as ever he went on: "Mrs. Dean was round at the flat too."

"God bless my soul!" said Colonel Osbert.

"I wonder if you could tell me: is there anyone who would have an interest in getting hold of his papers?"

Colonel Osbert again cleared his throat. "I can tell you this, sir. I don't understand

the position of Mrs. Dean and her husband. And I shall be glad, I don't mind owning, I shall be very glad to have poor dear Arthur's papers in my hands."

"Ah, thank you so much," said Lomas, and with bland adroitness got Colonel Osbert outside the door.

"He's not such a fool as he looks," Reggie murmured. "But there's better brains in it than his, Lomas old thing. A bad business, quite a bad business."

And then a clerk came in. Lomas read the letter he brought and said: "Good Gad! You're an offensive person, Fortune. Why did you tell me to go to the Foreign Office? Here is the Foreign Office. Now we shall be in the affair for life. The Foreign Office wants me to see His Excellency Mustapha Firouz."

"Accompanied by Sindbad the Sailor and Chu Chin Chow?" said Reggie. "Who is he?"

"Oh, he's quite real. He's the Median Minister. He—Why what is it now?" The question was to the clerk, who had come back with a card.

"Says he's anxious to see you immediately, sir. It's very urgent, and he won't keep you long."

"Major Dean," Lomas read, and lifted an eyebrow.

"Oh rather. Let 'em all come," said Reggie.

¶

IT was Major Dean, and Major Dean ill at ease. He had a difficulty in beginning. He discovered Reggie. "Hallo! I say, can you tell me anything?" he blurted out.

"I can't," said Reggie sharply. "I don't know why your father died," and Major Dean winced.

"I thought you had something to tell us, Major," Lomas said.

"Do you believe he was murdered? I've a right to ask that."

"But it's a very grave suggestion," Lomas purred. "Do you know of anyone who had a motive for killing your father?"

"It's this filthy mystery," the Major cried. "If he was murdered, I suppose he was poisoned. But how?"

"Or why?" said Reggie.

The Major fidgeted. "I dare say he knew too much," he said. "You know he was the adviser to the Median Government. He had some pretty serious stuff through his hands. I don't know what. He was always great on official secrecy. But I know he thought it was pretty damning for some one."

"Ah, thanks very much," Lomas said.

But the Major seemed unable to go.

"I mean to say, make sure you have all his papers and stick to 'em."

Lomas and Reggie studied him. "I wonder why you say that?" Lomas asked. "The papers would naturally pass to Colonel Osbert."

"I know. Osbert was the guv'nor's best pal, worse luck. I wouldn't trust him round the corner. That's what I mean. Now I've done it, I suppose"; he gave a grim chuckle. "It is done, anyway"; and he was in a hurry to go.

Reggie stood up and stretched himself. "This is pretty thick," said he, "and we've got His Excellency the Pasha of Nine Tales on the doorstep."

Into the room was brought a man who made them feel short, a towering man draped in folds of white. Above that flowing raiment rose a majestic head, a head finely proportioned, framed in hair and beard of black strewn with grey. The face was aquiline and bold, but of a singular calm, and the dark eyes were veiled in thought. He bowed to each man twice, sat down and composed his robe about him, and it was long before he spoke. "I thank you for your great courtesy": each word came alone as if it was hard to him. "I have this to say. He who is gone he was the friend of my people. To him we turned always and he did not fail. In him we had our trust. Now, sir, I must tell you we have our enemies, who are also, as it seems to us, your enemies. Those whom you call the Turks, they would do evil to us which would be evil to you. Of this we had writings in their hands and the hands of those they use. These I gave to him who is gone that he should tell us what we should do. For your ways are not our ways nor your law our law. Now he is gone, and I am troubled lest those papers fall again into the hands of the Turks."

"Who is it that Your Excellency fears? Can you tell me of any man?" Lomas said.

"I know of none here. For the Turks are not here in the open and this is a great land of many people. Yet in all lands all things can be bought at a price. Even life and death. This only I say. If our papers go to your King and the Ministers of your King it is well and very well. If they are

rendered to me that also may be well. But if they go I know not where, I say this is not just."

"I can promise Your Excellency they will go before the Foreign Office."

The Median stood up and bowed. "In England I never seek justice in vain," he said.

And when he was gone, "Good Gad, how little he knows," said Lomas. "Well, Fortune?" but Reggie only lit a cigar and curled himself up on the sofa. "What I like about you is that you never say I told you so. But you did. It is a Foreign Office touch," and still Reggie silently smoked. "Why, the thing's clear enough, isn't it?"

"Clear?" said Reggie. "Oh Peter! Clear?"

"Well, Sir Arthur had in his hands papers damaging to these blood-and-thunder Young Turks. It occurred to them that if he could die suddenly they might arrange to get the papers into their hands. So Sir Arthur is murdered, and either Osbert the executor or Major Dean the son is bribed to hand over the papers."

"In the words of the late Tennyson," said Reggie,

> And if it is so, so it is, you know;
> And if it be so, so be it.

'But it's not interesting, Lomas old thing."

"It would be interesting to hear you find a flaw in it," said Lomas.

Reggie shook his head. "Nary flaw."

"For my part," said Lomas with some heat, "I prefer to understand why a crime was committed. I find it useful. But I am only a policeman."

"And so say all of us." Reggie sat up. "Then why talk like a politician? Who did it and how are we going to do him in? That's our little job."

"Whoever it was, we've bilked him," said Lomas. "He has got nothing for his pains. The papers will go before the Foreign Office and then back to the Median Legation. A futile crime. I find a good deal of satisfaction in that."

"You're easy pleased then." Reggie's amiability was passing away. "A futile crime: thanks to the active and intelligent police force. But damn it, the man was murdered."

"My dear Fortune, can I help it? It's not the first and it won't be the last murder in which there is no evidence. You're pleased to be bitter about it. But you can't even tell me how the man was murdered. A poison unknown to the twentieth-century expert. No doubt that annoys you. But you needn't turn and rend me. There is also one more murderer unknown to the twentieth-century policeman. But I can't make evidence any more than you. We suspect either Osbert or Major Dean had a hand in it. But we don't know which and we don't know that either was the murderer. If we could prove that they were mixed up with the Young Turks, if we knew the man they dealt with we should have no case against them. Why, if we could find some Young Turk hireling was in the Royal Enclosure we should have no proof he was the murderer. We couldn't have," Lomas shrugged. "Humanly speaking, it's a case in which there can be no conviction."

"My only aunt, don't I know that?" Reggie cried. "And do you remember what the old Caliph said, 'In England I never seek justice in vain'? Well, that stings, Lomas—humanly speaking."

"Great heavens, what am I to do? What do you want to do?"

Reggie Fortune looked at him. The benign face of Reggie Fortune was set in hard lines. "There's something about the voice of a brother's blood crying from the ground," he said slowly.

"My dear fellow! Oh, my dear fellow, if you are going to preach," Lomas protested.

"I'm not. I'm going to tea," said Reggie Fortune. "Elise has got the trick of some new cakes. They're somewhat genial."

They did not meet again till the inquest.

¶

IT was horribly hot in court. The newspaper reporters of themselves would have filled, if given adequate space, a larger room. They sat in each other's pockets and thus yielded places to the general public, represented by a motley collection of those whom the coroner's officer permitted himself to call Nosey Parkers: frocks which might have come out of a revue chorus beside frocks which would well become a charwoman. And the Hon. Sidney Lomas murmured in the ear of his henchman Superintendent Bell, "I see several people who ought to be hanged, Bell, but no one who will give us the chance."

Mr. Reginald Fortune, that eminent surgeon, pathologist and what not, called to the witness-box, was languid and visibly

bored with the whole affair. He surveyed the court in one weary, dreamy glance and gazed at the coroner as if seeking, but without hope, some reason for his unpleasant existence. Yes, he had seen Sir Arthur immediately after death. He had formed the opinion that Sir Arthur died of asphyxia and heart failure. Yes, heart failure and asphyxia. He was, however, surprised.

From the reporters' table there was a general look of hungry interest. But one young gentleman who had grown fat in the service of crime breathed heavily in his neighbour's ear: "Nothing doing: I know old Fortune. This is a wash-out."

Mr. Fortune had lost interest in his own evidence. He was looking sleepily round the court. The coroner had to recall his wandering mind. "You were surprised, Mr. Fortune?"

"Oh, ah. Well, I couldn't explain the suddenness of the attack, the symptoms and so forth. So with the assistance of Dr. Harvey I made a further examination. We went into the matter with care and used every known test. There is no evidence to be found that any other factor was present than the natural causes of death."

"But that does not explain the sudden failure of the heart."

"I don't explain it," said Reggie. "I can't."

"Medicine," said the coroner sagely, "still has its mysteries. We must remember, gentlemen, that Sir Arthur had already completed our allotted span, the Psalmist's threescore years and ten. I am much obliged to you, Mr. Fortune."

And after that, as the fat young gentleman complained, there was nothing in it. The jury found that Sir Arthur's death was from natural causes and that they sympathised with the family. So much for the Ascot mystery. There remains the sequel.

When the court broke up and sought, panting, the open air, "He is neat, sir, isn't he?" said Lomas's henchman, Superintendent Bell. "Very adroit, is Mr. Fortune. That couldn't have been much better done." And Lomas smiled. It was in each man's simple heart that the Criminal Investigation Department was well rid of a bad business. They sought Reggie to give him lunch.

But Reggie was already outside; Reggie was strolling, as one for whom time has no meaning, towards the station. He was caught up by the plump young reporter, who would like you to call him a crime specialist. "Well, Mr. Fortune," he said in his ingratiating way, "good morning. How are you, sir? I say, you have put it across us in the Dean case."

The crime specialist then had opportunities for psychological study as Mr. Fortune's expression performed a series of quick changes. But it settled down into bland and amiable surprise. "My dear fellow," said Mr. Fortune, "how are you? But what's the trouble? There's nothing in the Dean case, never was."

"No, that's just it. And we were all out for a first-class crime story. After all the talk there's been, natural causes is pretty paltry."

Reggie laughed. "Sorry, sorry. We can't make crimes for you. But why did you talk? There was nothing to talk about."

"I say, you know, that's a bit thick," the crime specialist protested.

"My dear chap," said Reggie modestly, "if the doctor on the spot hadn't happened to be me, you would never have thought of the case. Nothing else in it."

"Oh, well, come now, Mr. Fortune! I mean to say—what about the C.I.D. holding up all the old man's papers and turning down his executor?"

Reggie was not surprised, he was bewildered. "Say it again slowly and distinctly," he entreated, and when that was done he was as one who tries not to laugh. "And very nice too. My dear fellow, what more do you want? There's a story for you."

"Well, it's never been officially denied," said the young man.

"Fancy that!" Reggie chuckled.

"But quite between ourselves, Mr. Fortune——"

"It's a great story," Reggie chuckled. "But really—Well, I ask you!" and he slid away.

¶

IN the hotel lounge he found Bell and Lomas and cocktails. "Pleasure before business, as ever," he reproached them, and ordered one for himself.

"And what have you been doing, then?" Lomas asked.

"I have been consoling the Fourth Estate. That great institution the Press, Mr. Lomas, sir. Through one of Gilligan's young lions. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings——"

"I wish you wouldn't talk to reporters," Lomas complained.

"You're so haughty. By the way, what was Ludlow Blenkinhorn doing here?" He referred to a solicitor of more ability than standing. "Osbert was here and his solicitor, the young Deans and their solicitor. Who was old Blenkinhorn representing?"

Bell and Lomas looked at each other. "Didn't see the fellow," said Lomas.

"Mr. Fortune's quite right, sir. Blenkinhorn was standing with the public. And that's odd, too."

"Highly odd. Lomas, my dear old thing, I wish you'd watch Blenkinhorn's office and Osbert's flat for any chaps who look a bit exotic, a bit foreign—and follow him up if you find one."

Lomas groaned. "Surely we've done with the case."

"Ye-es. But there's some fellow who hasn't. And he has a pretty taste in poisons. And he's still wanting papers."

"We've nothing to act on, you know," Lomas protested.

"Oh, not a thing, not a thing. But he might have."

Lomas nodded and Superintendent Bell went to the telephone.

When Mr. Fortune read *The Daily Post* in the morning he smiled upon his devilled kidneys. Its report of the inquest was begun with a little pompous descriptive work. "The mystery of the Ascot Tragedy was solved yesterday. In the cold sanity of the coroner's court the excitement of the last few days received its quietus. Two minutes of scientific evidence from Mr. Fortune—" and so on until young omniscience worked up to its private little scoop. "The melodramatic rumours of sensational developments in the case have thus only availed to expose the fatuity of their inventors." (This was meant for some rival papers.) "It may now be stated bluntly that nothing in the case ever gave rise to speculation among well-informed people, and that the stories of impounding documents and so forth have no foundation in fact."

But about lunch time Mr. Fortune received a curt summons from the Hon. Sidney Lomas and instantly obeyed it. "Well, you know, I thought I should be hearing from you," he smiled. "I felt, as it were, you couldn't live without me long."

"Did you, by Jove!" said Lomas bitterly. "I've been wishing all the morning you had been dead some time. Look at that!" He tossed across the table a marked copy of *The Daily Post*.

"Yes, I was enjoying that at breakfast. A noble institution, the British Press, Lomas. A great power. If you know how to use it."

"I wish to God you wouldn't spoof reporters. It's a low taste. And it's a damned nuisance. I can't contradict the rag and——"

"No, you can't contradict it. I banked on that," Reggie chuckled.

"Did you indeed? And pray what the devil are you at? I have had Osbert here raving mad——"

"Yes, I thought it would stir up Osbert. What's his line?"

"Wants the papers, of course. And as you very well know, confound you, they're all at the Foreign Office, the cream of them, and likely to be. He says we've no right to keep them after this. Nonsense, of course, but devilish inconvenient to answer. And at last the old man was quite pathetic, says it isn't fair to him to give out we haven't touched the papers. No more it is. He was begging me to contradict it officially. I could hardly get rid of him."

"Busy time for Lomas."

Damme, I have been at it all the morning. Old Ludlow Blenkinhorn turned up, too."

"I have clicked, haven't I?" Reggie chuckled.

"Confound you. He says he has a client with claims on the estate and is informed by the executor that all papers have been taken by us. Now he has read your damned article and he wants to know if the executor is lying."

"That is a conundrum, isn't it? And who is Mr. Ludlow Blenkinhorn's client?"

"He didn't say, of course."

"What a surprise. And your fellows watching his office, do they say?"

Lomas took up a scrap of paper. "They have sent us something. A man of foreign or mulatto appearance called on him first thing this morning. Was followed to a Bayswater lodging-house. Is known there as Sherif. Mr. A. Sherif. Thought to be an Egyptian."

"The negro or Hamitic heel!" Reggie murmured. "Do you remember, Lomas old thing?"

"Good Gad!" Lomas dropped his eyeglass. "But what the devil can we do?"

"Watch and pray," said Reggie. "Your

fellows watch Sherif and Blenkinhorn and Osbert and you pray. Do you pray much, Lomas ? "

They went in fact to lunch. They were not long back when a detective speaking over the telephone reported that a man of mulatto appearance had called on Colonel Osbert. Reggie sprang up. " Come on, Lomas. We'll have them in the act and bluff the whole thing out of them."

" What act ? "

" Collusion. This Egyptian - Syrian - negroid-Young Turk and the respectable executor. Come on, man."

¶

IN five minutes they were mounting to Colonel Osbert's flat. His servant could not say whether Colonel Osbert was at home. Lomas produced his card. " Colonel Osbert will see me," he announced, and fixed the man with a glassy stare.

" Well, sir, I beg pardon, sir. There's a gentleman with him."

" At once," said Lomas and walked into the hall.

The man still hesitated. From one of the rooms could be heard voices in some excitement. Lomas and Reggie made for that door. But as they approached there was a cry, a horrible shrill cry, and the sound of a scuffle. Reggie sprang forward. Someone rushed out of the room and Reggie, the smaller man, went down before him. Lomas clutched at him and was kicked in the stomach. The fellow was off. Reggie picked himself out of the hatstand and ran after him. Lomas, in a heap, gasping and hiccoughing, fumbled in his pocket. " B-b-blow," he stammered to the stupefied servant, and held out a whistle. " Like hell. Blow ! "

A long peal sounded through the block of flats.

Down below a solid man strolled out of the porter's lodge just as a gentleman of dark complexion and large feet was hurrying through the door. The solid man put out a leg. Another solid man outside received the gentleman on his bosom. They had then some strenuous moments. By the time Reggie reached them three hats were on the ground, but a pair of handcuffs clasped the coffee-coloured wrists.

" His pockets," Reggie panted, " his waistcoat pockets."

The captive said something which no one understood, and struggled. One of the detectives held out a small white-metal case. Reggie took from it a hypodermic syringe. " I didn't think you were so up-to-date," said Reggie. " What did you put in it ? Well, well, I suppose you won't tell me. Take him away."

He went back to find Lomas and the servant looking at Colonel Osbert. Colonel Osbert lay on the floor. There was froth at his lips and on his wrist a spot of blood. Reggie knelt down beside him . . .

" Too late ? " Lomas said hoarsely.

Reggie rose. " Well, you can put it that way," he said. " It's the end."

In Lomas's room Reggie spread himself on a sofa and watched Lomas drink whisky and soda. " A ghastly business," Lomas said : he was still pale and unsteady. " That creature is a wild beast."

" He'll go where he belongs," said Reggie, who was eating bread and butter. " All according to plan."

" Plan ? My God, the man runs amuck ! "

" Oh, no, no, no. He wanted those papers for his employers. He contracted with Osbert to hand them over when Dean was dead. He murdered Dean and Osbert couldn't deliver the goods. So I told him through the papers that Osbert had them. He thought Osbert was bilking him and went to have it out with him. Osbert didn't satisfy him, he was sure he had been done and he made Osbert pay for it. All according to plan."

Lomas set down his glass. " Fortune,' he said nervously, " Fortune—do you mean —when you put that in the paper—you meant the thing to end like this ? "

" Well, what are we here for ? " said Reggie. " But you know you're forgetting the real interest of the case."

" Am I ? " said Lomas weakly.

" Yes. What is his poison ? "

" Oh, good Gad," said Lomas.

Fortitude

"Strength alone knows conflict"

By EDMONDO DE AMICIS

(*Specially translated for* THE ARGOSY *by H. Elrington.*)

Writing of his own experience as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Italian army, from which he resigned in 1866, Edmondo De Amicis quickly won fame as an author. Few writers have so feelingly described the horrors and brutalities of war, while at the same time there is a tender element in De Amicis's stories which artistically balances the cruder effects.

"LOOK here," said my friend a few evenings ago, and pointed out to me from a window of his house which overlooked a small square—a little balcony on the fourth floor of a house opposite—" do you see that man ? "

I looked and saw a man seated in the corner, with one arm resting on the parapet, but I could not distinguish his features.

" That man," went on my friend, " is my antipathy to such an extent that I have more than once thought of changing my house simply for the sake of getting rid of the sight of him. You will ask me why, and all I can tell you is this : that I have never spoken to him, that I have never heard his voice, that I don't know who he is or what he does, that I have not even seen his face, for my sight does not reach so far, even with the aid of glasses. That man is obnoxious to me because every evening, exactly at the same hour, he rises from the table and comes to sit in that corner, and every evening, as if he were an automaton, he crosses one leg over the other and stretches his arm over the parapet. Never by any chance does he move his leg before his arm, Heaven forbid ! First the arm and then the leg. This is in itself, you must acknowledge, enough to bore one, is it not ?

" But that is the least of it. Every evening a woman, who appears to be his wife, before he rises, runs to put his chair in its place, brings him his pipe, puts it into his hands, and lights it for him ; and every evening he allows himself to be waited on in this way, pompous and haughty as a Sultan, without making the slightest effort to forestall her, without even seeming to perceive that he is being waited on. Then every moment he wants something, and the woman jumps up, runs out, and returns with a draught, or something of that sort. And he takes it, gulps it down and wipes his moustache with the luxurious egotism of a sybarite, without so much as giving himself the trouble of putting away the glass. Then, when his friends come to see him he doesn't attempt to rise, though he is able to stand, and at times walks up and down the balcony as freely and easily as you or I. He never looks down, nor up or around him, or salutes anyone ; in short, he appears to establish himself there that the world may move round him and make an idol of him ; as though he were born to exact care and service. Ah ! you smile. But as for me all these things are enough to make me hate the man ; that's the way I am made ; another might perhaps not notice the things which chafe me. I believe that I know that man yonder as I know you. Would you like to know who he is ? I don't know, but I can tell you as much about him as though I did.

" That man over there "—and so saying he pointed his finger at him, staring fixedly at the same time as though to draw his secret out of his eyes—" he is a shifty shopkeeper who is beginning to hoard money, and is lying low until the day when he will be able to blossom out into a rich man ; he has married that woman to save the expense of a server for the shop, and of a servant in the house ; he is niggardly, possibly for the sake of greed, and though he could afford the third floor, remains on the fourth for the sake of economy ; he has no children and does not desire to have any ; he despises everyone who is not in trade, looks upon ministers as thieves, students as donkeys, and those who have less coin than himself as beggars. And yet you laugh ! Don't you know that there is something intuitive in an antipathy ? Look here, I

should rejoice in an opportunity of being rude to him; he is hateful to me. It may be that I am a dreamer—an uncharitable dreamer—but what would you have? My heart tells me that yonder fellow is a mean cad; I dislike him, and get this off my chest I must."

It would be necessary to know this friend of mine—this youth of twenty summers, excitable and fiery, and to be used to his eccentric outbursts on the subject of fancies—the creation merely of his own imagination—to give credence to the fact that he could utter in one breath and without a smile this farrago of nonsense. I, in the meanwhile, studied the supposed shop-keeper, as well as the woman, who, with her arms crossed on her knees, sat in a contemplative attitude on the little footstool in front of him; and as I have better sight than my friend, it seemed to me that, though I could distinguish the lineaments of neither, the man was about forty, and the woman a little older than that.

I made him give me the glasses and focussed them on the woman. At first her face danced before my eyes in a confusing manner; then it steadied and I could see it distinctly. It was indeed the face of a woman resigned to a life of sacrifice; the hair was grey, the forehead furrowed, the eyes large and melancholy; a something—I can scarcely say what—of seriousness and reserve betrayed that she was one used to long suffering. "It would seem," I said to myself, "that my friend has really divined the truth." Then I turned the glasses on the man. At that moment he turned and showed me his full face.

"Whom do I see?" I exclaimed under my breath—"but can it be possible?" I adjusted the glasses and looked.

"But it is he! There is no doubt of it." The face that I had seen a hundred times in pictures. And then there returned to my mind the memory of a long-past action, and almost at the same moment the beginning and the end of the tale which follows here.

My friend asked me now: "Well? Is it not the face of a tradesman, of a churl, of a man puffed up with pride?"

I could no longer, as at first, smile at his words; I told him that he certainly was not an attractive man, but that I seemed to have seen him before; and that wishing to satisfy my curiosity as to whom he was, I should seek information from himself.

Accordingly, the next day I went straight away to pay him a visit, on the pretext of wishing to know the true story of the action in which he had been concerned, because, as I told him, I wanted to write about it.

Accustomed to receive visits of the kind, he received me courteously, and told me everything, but in a detached manner, as though he spoke of another; also he spoke to me of the woman (who was not his wife) who tended him, and of the tenor of her life. "We have been comrades these ten years," he said. "I have some patience, so has she, and one lives—as God wills. The two great consolations of my life are the esteem of my fellows and the devotion of this poor unfortunate one."

I returned home, wrote all the evening, and all the next morning, and the following day brought my manuscript to my friend.

It was the hour at which the "shop-keeper" was wont to come out to breathe the air on the balcony.

After some other chatter my friend reverted to his antipathy.

"My friend," I said, "you have made a blunder."

"Impossible!" he replied with his wonted vivacity.

"Come—be serious," I said. "I want you to read these pages; they contain a historical story which I have written since I saw you; the hero of the tale is your antipathy, the 'shop-keeper.' I give you my word of honour that, with the exception of one or two artifices necessary to the story-teller, I have not departed one syllable from the truth."

My friend took the manuscript and began to read. After a while he raised his eyes, looked at the man on the balcony, and then at me; and then went on reading. As fast as he progressed, the oftener he looked at the man and at me; his face growing gradually graver. When he reached the last words he uttered a cry of astonishment, sprang to his feet, squeezed my hand and said in an agitated voice: "Do you give me your word that this is true?"

"I give you my word," I replied.

"And who is he?"

"That is he," I said.

Without another word he took his cap and went out hurriedly. I went to the window and watched him cross the square and go direct to the door of the house opposite. Presently I noticed that the man had disappeared from the balcony. In a

few minutes my friend came out again and recrossed the square.

"Ah, I know you," I said to myself, as I ran to open the door; "I know very well what you have been about."

My friend appeared forthwith on the threshold. "You," I exclaimed, "you have been to kiss that man on the forehead."

He looked at me, smiled, and throwing his arm round my neck, laughed gaily:

"No, of that I was not worthy; I went to kiss his hands."

II

IT was the summer of the year 1861, at which time the doings of the brigandage was the talk of Europe; during those memorable days when "Pietropaolo" wore the Napoleonic imperial on the chin of the liberator; when at Montemiletto they buried, still living, under a heap of corpses the men who had shouted "Vive l'Italia"; when at Viesti they devoured the flesh of the country-folk who resisted the orders of their plunderers; when Colonel Negri, near Pontelandolfo, saw hung out of the windows, like trophies, the bloody limbs of soldiers; when poor Lieutenant Bacci, having been wounded and taken prisoner, was killed after eight hours' horrible torture; when crowds of the maddened populace came out of the villages by night, torch in hand, to receive the outlaws; when they burned crops, destroyed houses, arrested families, hanged, drew and quartered; and to keep alive and increase the miserable slaughter there came from the right bank of the Tiber, troops, artillery and blessings.

On one of the last days of July, a little after sunrise, a mounted carabinier came riding through a lonely valley in the province of Capitanata, going towards San Severo, from which city he had started on the previous night to carry an order from his colonel to the commandant of a "flying column." He carried now, buttoned up within his tunic, the answer to that order in which the commandant said that at eight o'clock in the morning he would be at a certain ravine in the neighbouring mountain, which was a common resort of the brigands who were at this time infesting that part of the country. The bearer of the letter was a man of about thirty years of age, tall, lean, with small but sparkling eyes, two pointed moustaches, and the furrow between the eyebrows which denotes thought. His features expressed a premature gravity, to which his great two-cornered black hat seemed to add an air of melancholy. His erect bearing and something alert and decided in his gestures, proclaimed him a man prepared for all exigencies of the time or place. He went at a trot along a winding path, turning his head now this way, now that, watching the deserted fields and rocky mountains and the clear sky, and hearing no other sound than the clatter of his horse's hoofs or the rattle of his sabre.

Suddenly, as he passed between two high and thick hedges, he saw a flash and heard a shot. As he wheeled his horse round and grasped his pistol, the beast stumbled; and just as he looked down to see if it was hurt, he felt himself grasped from behind. At the moment he glanced back, a man had sprung out of the bushes from which the shot had come and was on him, while after him like a shadow appeared a third. There was neither time to free himself, to jump down, or to defend himself; he was dismounted and stretched on the ground. Here he tried to resist; he wriggled, struck, bit, but could not free himself; exhausted at last, he desisted, and allowed himself to be disarmed.

He had, however, under cover of the cloud of dust raised by the struggle, been able, by a rapid movement, to conceal the letter in his mouth, unperceived by his assailants. These tied his hands behind his back; raised him to his feet roughly and hastily, and hung round his neck his sabre, his folded cloak, and his valise. Then, having driven the horse behind the hedge, they dragged him across the fields, urging him forward, bewildered and staggering, with an infernal uproar of curses, threats, blows and laughter.

After proceeding in this way for half-an-hour, keeping always away from the beaten track to avoid a surprise, they slackened their speed. By this time they had reached the lower slopes of the mountains, and were in the midst of trees, in a place where there was no sign anywhere of houses or hovels, or any trace of human habitation. The carabinier, bent under the weight of his kit, gave no sign of either terror or anger; and his face pale, but undisturbed, showed a mind aware of the fate in store for him and a courage prepared to meet it. He was aware that to fall into the hands of the brigands in these days of savage reprisals, meant death; hence there was about him

something of its solemn calm; a person unaware of his position would have said merely from looking into his eyes: "This man is about to die."

The brigand who went first turned every now and then to shoot a glance of mingled curiosity and suspicion at him. The one who walked beside him, and who appeared to be the leader of the band, glanced by turns at his prisoner and at his comrade, exchanging with the latter a look of triumph.

"Look here," he said suddenly, hanging his musket on the carabinier's neck, "carry this for me."

"And mine also," added the man in front, and did the same.

"And yours?" asked the leader, turning towards the third brigand, who walked behind and appeared to be the youngest of the three.

"I?" retorted the latter; "I prefer to carry it myself . . . one never knows."

"Cowardly lout!" muttered the other, giving him a scornful glance; then he turned to the carabinier, and said: "Friend, now you will tell us where you were going?"

The carabinier was silent.

"Ho! Ho!" exclaimed the brigand, stooping to pluck a switch. "Do you understand?" And he struck him on the hands.

The other went on without answering.

"Speak, poor wretch," went on the brigand captain, throwing away the rod. "They all begin like you, and you will finish like all the rest. You are of flesh and blood, even you; when the shoe pinches you will cry out, you also—make your mind easy about that."

¶

SO saying, he gave him a blow to make him take a path by the side of a stream, along which they went straight forward for a bit, then passing a little bridge and turning round a hill, began to ascend by a narrow footpath the steep and rocky side of a mountain. The carabinier, his neck encumbered by the braces of the muskets, embarrassed by having his hands tied, stifled by his uniform, and sweating heavily, lost his balance as he ascended, stumbled over the stones, fell on his knees, rising with difficulty, only to fall again. The brigands striking him, abusing him, pushing him on to his feet, scoffing at him, howling: "Up, poltroon! You others when you catch us tie us to your horses. Tit for tat, Piedmontese."

Above, in the middle of the side of the mountain, they halted. At a point where the rock was all rough places, chasms and precipices, with here and there a narrow strip of shrubs and withered bushes, they came upon a hollow rock, curved like a vault, in front of which there stretched a small tract of level ground girdled completely by rocks, some of which had slid down from above, some—and these the smallest—were pushed by art between the others in such a manner as to form a sort of balcony. The rock served as roof and wall to a wooden hut which occupied a fourth part of the enclosed space. On the inner side of the rocks had been scooped out niches to serve as cupboards, and stairs from the top of which it was possible to look over the whole of the downward slope. The entrance was by an aperture not more than big enough to admit a man. Seen from without, there was no indication of the place being inhabited; inside, the general effect was that of a den, a retreat and a guard-room. In the niches were glasses, cups of milk, pots, bread, knives; from projecting points of the rocks hung knapsacks and flasks; in one corner was a heap of ashes and embers and the rock above was blackened; in the hovel cloths and straw were piled. On looking up, beyond the rocky cliff, and behind, and to the sides, there was nothing visible but boulders, deep fissures, and enormous masses of rock that seemed to hang suspended in the air, and here and there a tree showing only a scanty tuft of foliage. Below were the rugged slopes of the mountain, beyond them the plain, and beyond that other mountains.

A man standing on the last step of the stair, with his elbows resting on the rock, and his face concealed behind two stones, between which he peered as through a loophole, watched the arrival of the company. As soon as he perceived the carabinier, he struck his hand in token of satisfaction on one of the two stones, and watched with an eager eye every step he took, accompanying every blow that he saw given to him with a gesture and a curse, as if by that means he could give more force to the striker, and more pain to the stricken.

When they were within a few steps of the den, he left his post and went

to await them at the door. As soon as they reached it, the carabinier was thrust within by a savage push and fell unconscious in the middle of the enclosure ; the others followed hastily, panting, puffing, and flinging here and there bags, hats, and arms. Then they seated themselves around on the rocks and were silent for a little, while they recovered their breath and wiped the sweat from their faces.

" Here is one of them ! " exclaimed the captain, turning to the comrade who had come out to receive them.

" Good ! " said the latter. Then, glancing at the prisoner and perceiving that he wore spurs, he said to the captain : " What about the horse ? "

" Don't talk to me of it ! " said the captain angrily. " Had it not been necessary to put this cursed carabinier to the question, I should have taken the horse rather than the man."

Then in a few words he told what had happened.

" No matter," said the other ; " 'tis a good day's work ! " Then he went over to the carabinier, helped him to rise, and having stared at him for a little with an air of stupid curiosity, he took off his back the muskets, cloak, and sabre, and then taking off his hat he looked him up and down, smiled, and flung him to one side. The carabinier leant exhausted again against the hovel, and began to watch the brigands with the grave, slow glance of a sick man whose thoughts are already beginning to wander away from life. Meanwhile the brigands set to work to rummage in his valise.

They were ill-looking ruffians, worthy of the place and of their doings. He who appeared to be their leader, was a man of about forty, short but corpulent, with a large head, shoulders up to his ears, and bandy legs with enormous calves ; from head to foot he was broad, stumpy, thick-set, as it were a giant cut short who had blown out in width in proportion to the manner in which he had been curtailed in length ; he was black-bearded, moustached, and hairy to such an extent that there was only visible a little of his forehead and the top of his cheeks.

Of the other three, two appeared to be brothers ; they had the same narrow forehead, the same pug nose, the same foxy eyes, the same lipless mouth in the shape of a semi-circle reversed, the same sharp-pointed, beardless chin, and were both small and wiry. All of them had in their eyes a something difficult to describe, at once gloomy, cunning, sensual, devilish, revealing the mixture in such natures of superstition and ferocity, of rash courage and habitual vigilance. There was, as they fell upon the provisions, both in gesture and step, and even in their outbursts of anger, something that suggested the quick spring of tigers. They wore hats of sugar-loaf shape, high boots and a wide jacket open in front, and between this jacket and their breeches showed small portions of shirt, held in its place by a blue scarf. The fourth brigand, who appeared to be the youngest, had a more human face ; he, like the two who had the air of being brothers, was small and beardless.

" Now," said the captain, when he had finished searching the valise, " make him strip off those rags ; then we will eat a mouthful or two, and after that—well, we shall see."

The two brothers approached the carabinier, and one of them untied his arms while the other held a musket to his breast. The two released arms dropped heavily to his sides as though they had been the arms of a corpse.

" Off with the uniform ! " said one of the brigands.

The carabinier looked at them and remained for a moment perplexed, with a frown on his forehead and his lips pressed between his teeth.

The youngest brigand regarded him sadly.

" *You*," said the captain, who had remained seated near the door, to this one, " go to your post."

The youth, as though obeying a habitual order, went up the stair, from which one of the brigands had watched the approach of his companions ; he rested his elbows on the rock, put his face between the two stones, and remained motionless.

" Off with the uniform ! " repeated the brigands, both raising their hands at the same time.

" Give him a blow that will leave the mark of your fingers on him," said the captain.

The carabinier winced, as if he had been touched on the raw, then bent his head in token of submission and took off his uniform. The two brigands seized it ; searched in the pockets, in the sleeves—everywhere, then threw it into the hovel.

One of them searched also the pockets of the prisoner's breeches, and said to the captain : " Nothing."

" The worse for him," replied the latter. " Bind him to the iron."

The two ruffians bound the carabinier, with hands crossed behind his back, to a large hook fixed to one of the posts of the hovel. The wretched man was white as death and shivered as though in an access of fever.

Then the three brigands drew from the niches some provisions, seated themselves upon three rocks, and began to eat, talking tranquilly in short and occasional sentences, as though food rather than talk was the business in hand.

" Did you hear the news regarding Casalvecchio ? "

" That affair of Don Alessio ? "

" Yes ; two hundred ducats ransom."

" Paid ? "

" Paid."

" What a catch ! "

" And three hundred ducats to the mayor."

" They were prudent. He and his brother between them own much land. All along the Fortore, for two miles, is his."

" But the best that has fallen out has been at Biccari : six horses, five muskets, a thousand ducats and eight bags of fodder, at one swoop."

Here he threw the rind of an orange at the carabinier, saying : " Take it."

"And I hear," went on another, " that there has been ill-luck at Cerignola."

" Between the bands of Salvatore Codipietro and the Piedmontese they were taken at unawares. There has been espionage on the part of the Mayor. Seven taken."

" With the captain ? "

" No."

" Shot ? "

The brigand nodded.

" Holy Mother ! " exclaimed the other, and turned towards the carabinier : " Did you hear that, eh ? But there will be tit for tat, you may be quite sure. Some day before long every tree in the country will have the entrails of a carabinier hanging on it."

And he tossed off a glass of wine.

" Look ! " said another, drawing the attention of his comrade to the carabinier, " he is thinking of something."

" Thinking of what ? " asked the captain, wiping his moustache.

" Of mother, eh ? " asked the first speaker

" Where did you leave her ? "

" Let us hear."

And they turned all three to stare at him. The poor young man had closed his eyes ; they remained closed for a little ; when he opened them again they were moist, and looked away, far beyond the mountains.

The three brigands laughed.

" But the best of it is," said one, " is that he won't speak. What is the reason . . . pride ? "

" Modesty," replied the other with an unpleasant laugh.

" Fear," added the captain.

The carabinier shook his head, as though to say no.

"Ah, no ? " exclaimed the brigand, jumping to his feet. " Now we shall see."

Then he turned to the others with an air of determination : " This fellow was carrying orders to enable them to catch us in the nest. We have lost too much time already. Let us make him disgorge them "

" Let us make him disgorge them," replied the others, rising.

The carabinier shook himself and raised his head as though to say : " I am prepared," and the three brigands planted themselves in front of him. Had anyone at the moment noticed the youth who was acting as vidette, they would have seen him tremble like a leaf and turn away that it might not be discovered that his face was white with terror. The captain, however, observed him, and with an imperious gesture signed to him to attend to his duty ; whereupon he took up his attitude as at first.

" Now then," began the captain, turning to the carabinier, and speaking in a tone that implied further hesitation was useless : " from whence did you come ? "

The prisoner frowned and fixed the brigand with a steady glance which expressed a will stronger than his, and was silent.

The brigand, without saying another word, struck him such a violent blow under the chin that there was a noise of smashing teeth. " Will you answer now ? "

The carabinier bent his head, emptying his mouth of the blood which filled it ; then, raising his eyes to the other's face with an expression of imperturbable haughtiness, made a gesture that signified " no."

The brigand bit his lip, exchanged a forced smile with his companions ; then with a deliberate air, put his hand in his

pocket, drew out a knife, opened it, unbuttoned the carabinier's shirt, and applied the point of the blade to the base of his throat. His victim made a convulsive movement, as if the blade had already entered.

" No fear," muttered the brigand, and drew the knife slowly and lightly from the neck to the waist, as though one drew a line on a table. Upon the breast of his unfortunate victim showed a long, red line, like a razor-cut, that disappeared rapidly as drops of blood spurted out; the drops falling like tears, over and under his clothes, and even down to the ground.

"Ah! Ah!" cried the captain savagely. " Now we shall see, eh?"

" Look how it bleeds!" exclaimed the other.

The youngest brigand covered his face with his hands.

" Speak now!" exclaimed the captain.

The carabinier watched the blood trickle down, then he raised his head, fixed his eyes on the brigand's face, and with the same expression in them as before made the gesture " no."

His three captors stared at him, more in amazement than anger.

" Idiot! Do you then want to die?" roared the captain, thrusting his face so close to that of the carabinier as almost to touch him, and shaking his open hand in his face. " Can you not see that you are in our hands, alone and helpless, and that we can tear you to pieces like a dog? What do you hope for? Who will arrive to rescue you? Say something. Let us hear the sound of your voice. Say at least one word."

The carabinier remained dumb.

Seized by an access of rage, one of the brigands raised his knife; but the captain caught him by the arm, saying: " No, not the knife," and grasped a musket; " this is the way to prove him." And lifting the weapon from the ground, he struck him on the feet with so much force that the bone cracked, the victim uttered a sharp groan, and his whole body was convulsed as though by an epileptic fit. But at the same time drawing strength from suffering, he struck the injured foot on the ground, raised his head and almost roared, " No!"

The three brigands all grasped him by the neck, pressing it so as almost to make his eyes start from his head, whereupon the youth who was acting sentinel, driven desperate by a horror which he could not overcome, cried, his face and voice half-frenzied: "Ah, for Heaven's sake, kill him at once! Put a bullet through his head. What is the use of making him suffer so?"

The three brigands, taken aback rather by his audacity than his actual words, turned and stared stupidly at him; but their bewilderment did not last long. The captain threw himself upon the rash youth, and with a blow on the nape of the neck knocked his head against the rock. The lad, half-stunned, reverted to his former attitude, but at the same time glancing down the mountain slope, gave a slight start, leaned farther out, and remained motionless, his eyes fixed. The captain of the brigands did not notice him and turned towards his victim. He was livid, grinding his teeth and trembling; even his own comrades looked at him with fear. He put one of his great hands on the carabinier's head, raising the other hand, his forefinger menacing, and looking at him sideways out of his bloodshot eyes said in a husky voice:

" Listen! . . . It was in an ill-hour for yourself that you tried to play the pig-headed game with me. You do not know the sort of man I am . . . I have made the hair of braver men than you stand on end; you haven't the faintest idea of my capacity for making you suffer . . . I am capable of stabbing you from now until morning without killing you . . . to reduce you to something with scarcely the semblance of a man . . . to wring the eyes out of your head . . . You know what has happened to others . . . do not push me to extremity . . . tell what you have got to tell before I lose control of myself."

Having given this ultimatum, he raised his hand from the other's head, looked at it, and saw hairs on it. With a scornful gesture he flung them in his face, where they clung to his mouth. The carabinier spat to get rid of them. The brigands interpreted this as an act of contempt, and could contain themselves no longer. All three flung themselves on him at once with a cry of rage, bending his head, twisting his eyes; pouncing on him like three beasts, they set to work to torture him with the points of their daggers, with their nails, their teeth, in haste and silence; now one or other paused for a moment to recover his breath, saying to each other: " Easy! easy!" as a warning not to kill him outright. Pricking, punching, biting, and scattering on the

ground drops of blood and tufts of hair; they were blind, drunk, bestial. The only sound audible was the panting of the three executioners and the rattle of their daggers as they struck against each other, and the dry sob of their victim. They no longer appeared like men, but beasts twisted round one man, all that was horrible in madness, vileness and ferocity being present in them.

"Have you not killed him yet?" exclaimed the young brigand again, in great distress, turning rapidly backwards and forwards, now towards his comrades, now towards the country, and raising his voice gradually as if he sought to conceal some approaching noise.

"Do not kill him yet! Wait! He will tell all. If you kill him, you will learn nothing. Try him once again. He has made a sign that he wishes to speak. Kill him then. I will give him a blow of my dagger in the heart if you will not give it yourself. Put down the daggers. Strike only with the fists. Don't you see that he is dying?"

Without ceasing to shout, he shot a glance outside, close at hand, at the foot of the parapet; then he jumped into the enclosure and changing in a moment the expression of his face and his voice, he exclaimed in a tone of unutterable contempt:

"Ah, cowards! Three against one dying man!"

"Damnation!" roared the captain of the brigands, flinging himself with lifted dagger against him.

"Too late!" cried he joyfully, and pointing to the entrance he added: "Look!"

At the same moment as the other two brigands, warned by the youth's words, flung a large cloak over their victim, while the captain grasped his musket ready to face the mysterious enemy that was advancing on them, there burst forth an uproar; a clatter of arms, voices, footsteps, and bayonets and gun-barrels glittered before the entrance, on the boulders and the higher rocks, and there burst into the enclosure a troop of carabiniers, who, in a flash, surrounded, overthrew, disarmed and struck down all whom they found in the enclosure. There followed a few moments silence, during which nothing was heard but the heavy breathing of the exhausted carabiniers.

"Aid the dying man!" the young brigand cried abruptly, who, like the rest, was kneeling with his hands on the ground under the bayonet of a carabinier.

"What dying man?" asked the captain of the carabiniers, coming forward dusty and panting.

"There. In the corner," replied the young brigand, pointing to it.

All turned to look, but could see nothing.

"Under the cloak," repeated the brigand.

The captain, followed by the glances of the others, approached the hovel, grasped the cloak and flung it on the ground. A cry of horror burst from all as they saw the terrible sight. The wretched prisoner, kneeling on the ground, with his arms twisted behind his back, and his head sunk upon his breast, was a livid mass of wounds and blood, as though he had been well nigh flayed alive. He made an effort to raise his head.

"Release him at once," exclaimed the captain. "Give him something to drink."

Three of the carabiniers ran towards him, untied him, and placing him in a sitting position, set to work to examine his wounds; the others, blind with fury, battered the brigands with the butts of their muskets.

"Throw down your weapons!" cried the captain; and then he turned to the young brigand. "Speak, you."

The carabinier who held him allowed him to rise to his feet.

"When was this man taken?" asked the captain. "Tell the truth before you die."

"That man," began the youth in a faint voice, trembling between horror and fear—"that carabinier . . . they took him this morning . . . and—and—brought him here . . . they bound him . . . they wanted to force him to speak . . . but he would not—would not speak . . . then they fell upon him . . . I saw it. Oh, my God! My God!"

"But who are you?" cried the captain, snatching off his hat.

All turned with the exclamation: "A woman!"

"Yes," she cried in a half-frenzied tone . . ." me, they dragged away . . . a fortnight ago . . . they put a knife to my throat . . . and brought me here with them. But I have not soiled my hands with blood—no. I swear it. I came with them only because otherwise they would have murdered me. I belong to San Severo . . . a poor country-girl."

"Why have you not drawn a pistol on one of them?"

" I lacked the courage . . . they would have tortured me. You can see what they would have done . . . I thought I should have gone mad. If you had seen . . . But he " (and she pointed to the wounded man) " he has been one in a thousand—no ordinary man—he has endured everything . . . and never said a word—not one word."

" Drag these cowards to the feet of their victim," cried the captain.

The carabiniers dragged the three brigands before the wounded man, whose head had been bound with a handkerchief that covered his face.

" I am here, I," cried the captain, bending down to the unfortunate man, who showed signs now of recovering consciousness. " You are safe. You are among comrades. Courage. Look! Your assassins are kneeling before you."

The carabinier slowly raised his head and shook himself all over. Then he stretched out a hand, placed it on the head of one of the brigands, drew it back, smiled with his bloody lips, thrust his head forward and spat something in his face.

" What is this? " asked the captain, picking up he could not tell what, but something white and soft that had fallen from the mouth of the tortured man.

" The . . . answer . . . to the colonel " answered the wounded man in a voice that was a mere thread.

" To the Colonel of San Severo? My answer? That which I gave you this morning? "

The carabinier nodded " yes."

The captain sprang towards him, put his arm round his neck and kissed his forehead; then he jumped to his feet and called to his soldiers: " Salute this brave man, my lads! He carried to the colonel the message that announced our expedition, the hour, and where we were going. If the brigands had read it they would have escaped. He put it in his mouth, and refused to speak and betray us; he endured tortures in silence. He is a hero. He is a martyr. He is a great soul! "

" Yes! " cried all the carabiniers together, speaking as with one voice from the depths of the heart.

" Kiss his feet, cowards! " the captain shouted to the brigands.

One after the other, crawling across the ground like serpents, kissed the feet of the wounded man.

" Captain," cried the woman then, looking at him wild-eyed, " I could have warned them that you were coming, but I did not do so; I let you come. Grant me one favour as a reward for this: I am a lost woman . . . I cannot return home. Order that I may be shot with these others."

" No! " cried the wounded man with amazing energy.

All turned to him.

" You . . ." went on the sufferer, in a weak voice, extending a bloody hand to the woman, " it falls to you to perform a work of mercy."

" What? Speak! My God! I ask you for charity's sake," cried the woman, throwing herself at his feet with clasped hands.

" Come with me," murmured the wounded man.

" Where? " she asked.

" Everywhere."

The others looked at each other, puzzled.

" What is it you say? " asked the woman.

" You have not seen all . . . all my wounds . . ." said the carabinier. " Look."

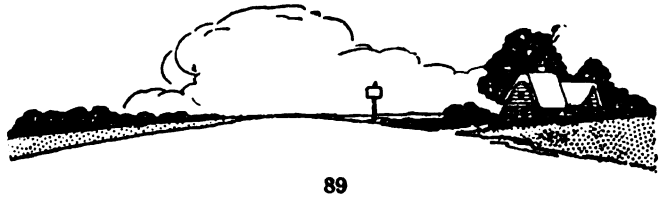
He raised the handkerchief that bound his forehead. They all drew near him eagerly, looked, and uttered a strangled cry of horror and pity. The man was blind.

" To death! " shouted all the carabiniers, striking the brigands with their muskets and feet—" To death! " Their captain's voice could not be heard above the tumult; the carabiniers dragging down the wretches in their headlong course.

" Will you do this work . . . of mercy? " asked the wounded carabinier of the woman, when they were left alone.

She raised her eyes to heaven and said: " My life is yours."

They clasped each other's hands, and the sound of a discharge of muskets down below seemed to seal the compact between the pitiful woman and the hero.



Summer Time

One Way to Keep Cool

NOTHING amuses me more than to observe the utter want of perception of a joke in some minds. Mrs. Jackson called one day and spoke of the oppressive heat. "Heat, ma'am!" I said, "it was so dreadful here that I found there was nothing left for it but to take off my flesh and sit in my bones." "Take off your flesh and sit in your bones, sir! Oh, Mr. Smith! how could you do that?" "Nothing more easy, ma'am; come and see next time." But she ordered her carriage and evidently thought it a very unorthodox proceeding.

Sydney Smith.

THE sandy cat by the Farmer's chair
Mews at his knee for dainty fare;
Old Rover in his moss-greened house
Mumbles a bone, and barks at a mouse
In the dewy fields the cattle lie
Chewing the cud 'neath a fading sky
Dobbin at manger pulls his hay:
Gone is another summer's day

Walter de la Mare.

MIDSUMMER, like an army with banners, was moving through the heavens.

Thomas de Quincey.

Sunshine Awakens the City

THE town was glad with morning light; places that had shown ugly and distrustful all night long, now wore a smile; and sparkling sunbeams dancing on chamber windows, and twinkling through blind and curtain before sleepers' eyes, shed light even into dreams, and chased away the shadows of the night. Birds in hot rooms, covered up close and dark, felt it was morning, and chafed and grew restless in their little cells; bright-eyed mice crept back to their tiny homes and nestled timidly together; the sleek house-cat, forgetful of her prey, sat winking at the rays of sun starting through key-hole and cranny in the door, and longed for her stealthy run and warm sleek bask outside. The nobler beasts confined in dens stood motionless behind their bars, and gazed on fluttering boughs and sunshine peeping through some little window, with eyes in which old forests gleamed—then trod impatiently the track their prisoned feet had worn—and stopped and gazed again. Men in their dungeons stretched their cramp cold limbs and cursed the stone that no bright sky could warm. The flowers that sleep by night, opened their gentle eyes and turned them to the day. The light creation's mind was everywhere, and all things owned its power.

Charles Dickens.

An Extraordinary Heat Wave

THE summer of the year 1783 was an amazing and portentous one, and full of horrible phenomena; for, besides the alarming meteors and tremendous thunderstorms that affrighted and distressed the different counties of this kingdom, the peculiar haze, or smoky fog, that prevailed for many weeks in this island, and in every part of Europe, and even beyond its limits, was a most extraordinary appearance, unlike anything known within the memory of man. By my journal I find that I had noticed this strange occurrence from June 23rd to July 20th inclusive during which period the wind varied to every quarter without making any alteration in the air. The sun at noon, looked as blank as a clouded moon, and shed a rust-coloured ferruginous light on the ground, and floors of rooms; but was particularly lurid and blood-coloured at rising and setting. All the time the heat was so intense that butchers' meat could hardly be eaten on the day after it was killed; and the flies swarmed so in the lanes and hedges that they rendered the horses half-frantic, and riding irksome. The country people began to look with a superstitious awe at the red, louring aspect of the sun.

Gilbert White.

DARK in the garden, darkly glows
The crimson richness of the rose,
And blackly dark the peony-blaze
Of hot gold middle-summer days.
Ripe lilies lift into the height
Of slowly dropping dimness, white
And whiter though the dusk-foam thickens
And all things else are looming stark
And starker, dark and blackly dark.
The lingering air from the far noonhour quickens
Once more to life, to ghostly life, and soon
Into the void of sightless, different noon,
The midnight's noon, shall be outspilled
Its fragrance finally and uttermost
Of flower and leaf distilled
Which, too, must soon be ghost.

Thomas Moult.

At the Moorland Cottage

IN fine summer days Maggie sat out of doors at her work. Just beyond the court lay the rocky moorland, always as gay as that with its profusion of flowers. If the court had its clustering noisettes and fraxinellas, and sweet briars, and great tall white lilies, the moorland had its little creeping scented rose, its straggling honeysuckle, and an abundance of yellow cistus; here and there a great rock cropped out of the ground, and over it the yellow stone-crop of scarlet-leaved crane's-bill grew luxuriantly. Such a rock was Maggie's seat. I believe she considered it her own, and loved it accordingly; although its real owner was a great lord, who lived far away, and had never seen the moor, much less the piece of grey rock, in his life.

Elizabeth Gaskell.

The Winding Path

THIS path winds on under the trees with the wantonness of a river or a living creature; and even, if I may say so, with the subtlety of a spirit, contracting or enlarging itself, visible or invisible as it likes. There is a continued opening between the trees, a narrow slip of green turf besprinkled with flowers, chiefly daisies, and here it is, if I may use the same kind of language, that this pretty path plays its pranks, wearing away the turf and flowers at its pleasure. When I took the walk I was speaking of, last summer, it was Sunday. I met several of the people of the country posting to and from church, in different parts; and in a retired spot by the river-side were two musicians (belonging probably to some corps of volunteers) playing upon the hautboy and the clarionet. You may guess I was not a little delighted; I may say, brought back to my subject, which is this—that all just and solid pleasure in natural objects rests upon two pillars, God and Man.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

SUMMER eternal, born
From year to year, as morn
Is born from day to day—reviving glows:
Her breath the scented gale,
Her voice the nightingale,
Her form incarnate in the queenly rose.

Summer, whose power confessed
Instils each maiden's breast
With such strange yearning as the red buds know:
When in their bosoms sweet
With unaccustomed feet
Love walks among the silence and the snow.

Summer, who dyes the meek
And happy maiden's cheek,
With the new blushes of her wild wood rose;
Who steeps her lips anew
In Love's ambrosial dew,
And fills her fancy with delicious woes.

LORD DE TABLEY.

The Present to be Enjoyed

NOW is a breeze of Paradise blowing from the garden, and here am I with my joy-bestowing draught, and my beloved-one, beautiful as a houri.

Why should not the beggar to-day boast himself a king? His canopy the shadow of a cloud, his banqueting hall the corner of a corn-field!

The meadow may tell him the story of Paradise: wise he is not who expendeth on a future Paradise the ready-money of the present!

HAFIZ.

A Summer Outing

WITH my wife only to take the air, it being very warm and pleasant, to Bow and Old Ford: and thence to Hackney. There light, and played at shuffle-board, eat cream and good cherries: and so with good refreshment home.

SAMUEL PEPYS.

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Monkey-nuts

The comedy of a strange wooing

By D. H. LAWRENCE

AT first Joe thought the job O.K. He was loading hay on the trucks, along with Albert, the corporal. The two men were pleasantly billeted in a cottage not far from the station: they were their own masters, for Joe never thought of Albert as a master. And the little siding of the tiny village station was as pleasant a place as you could wish for. On one side, beyond the line, stretched the woods: on the other, the near side, across a green smooth field red houses were dotted among flowering apple trees. The weather being sunny, work being easy, Albert, a real good pal, what life could be better! After Flanders, it was heaven itself.

Albert, the corporal, was a clean-shaven, shrewd-looking fellow of about forty. He seemed to think his one aim in life was to be full of fun and nonsense. In repose, his face looked a little withered, old. He was a very good pal to Joe, steady, decent and grave under all his "mischief"; for his mischief was only his laborious way of skirting his own ennui.

Joe was much younger than Albert—only twenty-three. He was a tallish, quiet youth, pleasant looking. He was of a slightly better class than his corporal, more personable. Careful about his appearance, he shaved every day. "I haven't got much of a face," said Albert. "If I was to shave every day like you, Joe, I should have none."

There was plenty of life in the little goods-yard: three porter youths, a continual come and go of farm wagons bringing hay, wagons with timber from the woods, coal carts loading at the trucks. The black coal seemed to make the place sleepier, hotter. Round the big white gate the station-master's children played and his white chickens walked, whilst the station-master himself, a young man getting too fat, helped his wife to peg out the washing on the clothes line in the meadow.

The great boat-shaped wagons came up from Playcross with the hay. At first the farm-men waggoned it. On the third day one of the land-girls appeared with the first load, drawing to a standstill easily at the head of her two great horses. She was a buxom girl, young, in linen overalls and gaiters. Her face was ruddy, she had large blue eyes.

"Now that's the waggoner for us, boys," said the corporal loudly.

"Whoa!" she said to her horses; and then to the corporal: "Which boys do you mean?"

"We are the pick of the bunch. That's Joe, my pal. Don't you let on that my name's Albert," said the corporal to his private. "I'm the corporal."

"And I'm Miss Stokes," said the land-girl coolly, "if that's all the boys you are."

"You know you couldn't want more, Miss Stokes," said Albert politely. Joe, who was bare-headed, whose grey flannel sleeves were rolled up to the elbow, and whose shirt was open at the breast, looked modestly aside as if he had no part in the affair.

"Are you on this job regular, then?" said the corporal to Miss Stokes.

"I don't know for sure," she said, pushing a piece of hair under her hat, and attending to her splendid horses.

"Oh, make it a certainty," said Albert.

She did not reply. She turned and looked over the two men coolly. She was pretty, moderately blonde, with crisp hair, a good skin, and large blue eyes. She was strong, too, and the work went on leisurely and easily.

"Now!" said the corporal, stopping as usual to look round, "pleasant company makes work a pleasure—don't hurry it, boys." He stood on the truck surveying the world. That was one of his great and absorbing occupations: to stand and look out on things in general. Joe, also standing on the truck, also turned round to see what was to be seen. But he could not become blankly absorbed, as Albert could.

Miss Stokes watched the two men from

under her broad felt hat. She had seen hundreds of Alberts, khaki soldiers standing in loose attitudes, absorbed in watching nothing in particular. She had seen also a good many Joes, quiet, good-looking young soldiers with half-averted faces. But there was something in the turn of Joe's head, and something in his quiet, tender-looking form, young and fresh—which attracted her eye. As she watched him closely from below, he turned as if he felt her, and his dark-blue eye met her straight, light-blue gaze. He faltered and turned aside again and looked as if he were going to fall off the truck. A slight flush mounted under the girl's full, ruddy face. She liked him.

Always, after this, when she came into the sidings with her team, it was Joe she looked for. She acknowledged to herself that she was sweet on him. But Albert did all the talking. He was so full of fun and nonsense. Joe was a very shy bird, very brief and remote in his answers. Miss Stokes was driven to indulge in repartee with Albert, but she fixed her magnetic attention on the younger fellow. Joe would talk with Albert, and laugh at his jokes. But Miss Stokes could get little out of him. She had to depend on her silent forces. They were more effective than might be imagined.

Suddenly, on Saturday afternoon, at about two o'clock, Joe received a bolt from the blue—a telegram: "Meet me Belbury Station 6 p.m. to-day. M. S." He knew at once who M.S. was. His heart melted, he felt weak as if he had had a blow.

"What's the trouble, boy?" asked Albert anxiously.

"No—no trouble—it's to meet somebody." Joe lifted his dark-blue eyes in confusion towards his corporal.

"Meet somebody!" repeated the corporal, watching his young pal with keen blue eyes. "It's all right, then; nothing wrong?"

"No—nothing wrong. I'm not going," said Joe.

Albert was old and shrewd enough to see that nothing more should be said before the housewife. He also saw that Joe did not want to take him into confidence. So he held his peace, though he was piqued.

The two soldiers went into town, smartened up. Albert knew a fair number of the boys round about; there would be plenty of gossip in the market-place, plenty of lounging in groups on the Bath Road, watching the Saturday evening shoppers. Then a modest drink or two, and the movies. They passed an agreeable, casual, nothing-in-particular evening, with which Joe was quite satisfied. He thought of Belbury Station, and of M. S. waiting there. He had not the faintest intention of meeting her. And he had not the faintest intention of telling Albert.

And yet, when the two men were in their bedroom, half undressed, Joe suddenly held out the telegram to his corporal, saying: "What d'you think of that?"

Albert was just unbuttoning his braces. He desisted, took the telegram form, and turned towards the candle to read it.

"*Meet me Belbury Station 6 p.m. to-day. M. S.*," he read, *sotto voce*. His face took on its fun-and-nonsense look.

"Who's M. S.?" he asked, looking shrewdly at Joe.

"You know as well as I do," said Joe, non-committal.

"*M. S.*," repeated Albert. "Blamed if I know, boy. Is it a woman?"

The conversation was carried on in tiny voices, for fear of disturbing the householders.

"I don't know," said Joe, turning. He looked full at Albert, the two men looked straight into each other's eyes. There was a lurking grin in each of them.

"Well, I'm—*blamed!*" said Albert at last, throwing the telegram down emphatically on the bed.

"Wha—at?" said Joe, grinning rather sheepishly, his eyes clouded none the less.

Albert sat on the bed and proceeded to undress, nodding his head with mock gravity all the while. Joe watched him foolishly.

"What?" he repeated faintly.

Albert looked up at him with a knowing look.

"If that isn't coming it quick, boy!" he said. "What the blazes! What ha' you bin doing?"

"Nothing!" said Joe.

Albert slowly shook his head as he sat on the side of the bed.

"Don't happen to me when *I've* bin doin' nothing," he said. And he proceeded to pull off his stockings.

Joe turned away, looking at himself in the mirror as he unbuttoned his tunic.

"You didn't want to keep the appointment?" Albert asked, in a changed voice, from the bedside.

Joe did not answer for a moment. Then he said :

" I made no appointment."

" I'm not saying you did, boy. Don't be nasty about it. I mean you didn't want to answer the—unknown person's summons —shall I put it that way ? "

" No," said Joe.

" What was the deterring motive ? " asked Albert, who was now lying on his back in bed.

" Oh," said Joe, suddenly looking round rather haughtily. " I didn't want to." He had a well-balanced head, and could take on a sudden distant bearing.

" Didn't want to—didn't cotton on, like. Well—*they be artful, the women*—" he mimicked his landlord. " Come on into bed, boy. Don't loiter about as if you'd lost something."

Albert turned over, to sleep.

On Monday Miss Stokes turned up as usual, striding beside her team. Her " whoa ! " was resonant and challenging, she looked up at the truck as her steeds came to a standstill. Joe had turned aside, and had his face averted from her. She glanced him over—save for his slender succulent tenderness she would have despised him. She sized him up in a steady look. Then she turned to Albert, who was looking down at her and smiling in his mischievous turn. She knew his aspects by now. She looked straight back at him, though her eyes were hot. He saluted her.

" Beautiful morning, Miss Stokes."

" Very ! " she replied.

" Handsome is as handsome looks," said Albert.

Which produced no response.

" Now, Joe, come on here," said the corporal. " Don't keep the ladies waiting—it's the sign of a weak heart."

Joe turned, and the work began. Nothing more was said for the time being. As the week went on all parties became more comfortable. Joe remained silent, averted, neutral, a little on his dignity. Miss Stokes was off-hand and masterful. Albert was full of mischief.

The great theme was a circus, which was coming to the market town on the following Saturday.

" You'll go to the circus, Miss Stokes ? " said Albert.

" I may go. Are you going ? "

" Certainly. Give us the pleasure of escorting you."

" No, thanks."

" That's what I call a flat refusal—what, Joe ? You don't mean that you have no liking for our company, Miss Stokes ? "

" Oh, I don't know," said Miss Stokes. " How many are there of you ? "

" Only me and Joe."

" Oh, is that all ? " she said, satirically.

Albert was a little nonplussed.

" Isn't that enough for you ? " he asked.

" Too many by half," blurted out Joe, jeeringly, in a sudden fit of uncouth rudeness that made both the others stare.

" Oh, I'll stand out of the way, boy, if that's it," said Albert to Joe. Then he turned mischievously to Miss Stokes. " He wants to know what M. stands for," he said confidentially.

" Monkeys," she replied, turning to her horses.

" What's M. S. ? " said Albert.

" Monkey-nuts," she retorted, leading off her team.

Albert looked after her a little discomfited. Joe had flushed dark, and cursed Albert in his heart.

¶

ON the Saturday afternoon the two soldiers took the train into town. They would have to walk home. They had tea at six o'clock, and lounged about till half-past seven. The circus was in a meadow near the river—a great red-and-white striped tent. Caravans stood at the side. A great crowd of people was gathered round the ticket-caravan.

Inside the tent the lamps were lighted, shining on a ring of faces, a great circular bank of faces round the green grassy centre. Along with some comrades, the two soldiers packed themselves on a thin plank seat, rather high. They were delighted with the flaring lights, the wild effect. But the circus performance did not affect them deeply. They admired the lady in black velvet with rose-purple legs who leapt so neatly on to the galloping horse ; they watched the feats of strength, and laughed at the clown. But they felt a little patronising, they missed the sensational drama of the cinema.

Half-way through the performance Joe was electrified to see the face of Miss Stokes not very far from him. There she was, in her khaki and her felt hat, as usual ; he pretended not to see her. She was laughing at the clown ; she also pretended not to see him. It was a blow to him, and it made him angry. He would not even mention it

to Albert. Least said, soonest mended. He liked to believe she had not seen him. But he knew, fatally, that she had.

When they came out it was nearly eleven o'clock; a lovely night, with a moon and tall, dark, noble trees: a magnificent May night. Joe and Albert laughed and chaffed with the boys. Joe looked round frequently to see if he were safe from Miss Stokes. It seemed so.

But there were six miles to walk home. At last the two soldiers set off, swinging their canes. The road was white between tall hedges, other stragglers were passing out of the town towards the villages; the air was full of pleased excitement.

They were drawing near to the village when they saw a dark figure ahead. Joe's heart sank with pure fear. It was a figure wheeling a bicycle; a land girl; Miss Stokes. Albert was ready with his nonsense. Miss Stokes had a puncture.

"Let me wheel the rattler," said Albert.

"Thank you," said Miss Stokes. "You *are* kind."

"Oh, I'd be kinder than that, if you'd show me how," said Albert.

"Are you sure?" said Miss Stokes.

"Doubt my words?" said Albert. "That's cruel of you, Miss Stokes."

Miss Stokes walked between them, close to Joe.

"Have you been to the circus?" she asked him.

"Yes," he replied mildly.

"Have *you* been?" Albert asked her.

"Yes. I didn't see you," she replied.

"What!—you say so! Didn't see us! Didn't think us worth looking at," began Albert. "Aren't I as handsome as the clown, now? And you didn't as much as glance in our direction? I call it a downright oversight."

"I never *saw* you," reiterated Miss Stokes. "I didn't know you saw me."

"That makes it worse," said Albert.

The road passed through a belt of dark pine-wood. The village, and the branch road, was very near. Miss Stokes put out her fingers and felt for Joe's hand as it swung at his side. To say he was staggered is to put it mildly. Yet he allowed her softly to clasp his fingers for a few moments. But he was a mortified youth.

At the cross-road they stopped—Miss Stokes should turn off. She had another mile to go.

"You'll let us see you home," said Albert.

"Do me a kindness," she said. "Put my bike in your shed, and take it to Baker's on Monday, will you?"

"I'll sit up all night and mend it for you, if you like."

"No thanks. And Joe and I'll walk on."

"Oh—ho! Oh—ho!" sang Albert. "Joe! Joe! What do you say to that, now, boy? Aren't you in luck's way? And I get the bloomin' old bike for my pal. Consider it again, Miss Stokes."

Joe turned aside his face, and did not speak.

"Oh, well! I wheel the grid, do I? I leave you, boy——"

"I'm not keen on going any further," barked out Joe, in an uncouth voice. "She bain't my choice."

The girl stood silent, and watched the two men.

"There now!" said Albert. "Think o' that! If it was *me* now—" But he was uncomfortable. "Well, Miss Stokes, have me," he added.

Miss Stokes stood quite still, neither moved nor spoke. And so the three remained for some time at the lane end. At last Joe began kicking the ground—then he suddenly lifted his face. At that moment Miss Stokes was at his side. She put her arm delicately round his waist.

"Seems I'm the one extra, don't you think?" Albert inquired of the high bland moon.

Joe had dropped his head and did not answer. Miss Stokes stood with her arm lightly round his waist. Albert bowed, saluted, and bade good-night. He walked away, leaving the two standing.

Miss Stokes put a light pressure on Joe's waist, and drew him down the road. They walked in silence. The night was full of scent—wild cherry, the first bluebells. Still they walked in silence. A nightingale was singing. They approached nearer and nearer, till they stood close by his dark bush. The powerful notes sounded from the cover, almost like flashes of light—then the interval of silence—then the moaning notes, almost like a dog faintly howling, followed by the long, rich trill, and flashing notes. Then a short silence again.

Miss Stokes turned at last to Joe. She looked up at him, and in the moonlight he saw her faintly smiling. He felt maddened, but helpless. Her arm was round his waist, she drew him closely to her with a soft pressure that made all his bones rotten.

Meanwhile Albert was waiting at home. He put on his overcoat, for the fire was out, and he had had malarial fever. He looked fitfully at the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Sketch*, but he saw nothing. It seemed a long time. He began to yawn widely, even to nod. At last Joe came in.

Albert looked at him keenly. The young man's brow was black, his face sullen.

" All right, boy ? " asked Albert.

Joe merely grunted for a reply. There was nothing more to be got out of him. So they went to bed.

Next day Joe was silent, sullen. Albert could make nothing of him. He proposed a walk after tea.

" I'm going somewhere," said Joe.

" Where—Monkey-nuts ? " asked the corporal. But Joe's brow only became darker.

So the days went by. Almost every evening Joe went off alone, returning late. He was sullen, taciturn, and had a hang-dog look, a curious way of dropping his head and looking dangerously from under his brows. And he and Albert did not get on so well any more with one another. For all his fun and nonsense, Albert was really irritable, soon made angry. And Joe's stand-offish sulkiness and complete lack of confidence riled him, got on his nerves. His fun and nonsense took a biting, sarcastic turn, at which Joe's eyes glittered occasionally, though the young man turned unheeding aside. Then again Joe would be full of odd, whimsical fun, outshining Albert himself.

Miss Stokes still came to the station with the wain : Monkey-nuts, Albert called her, though not to her face. For she was very clear and good-looking, almost she seemed to gleam. And Albert was a tiny bit afraid of her. She very rarely addressed Joe whilst the hay-loading was going on, and that young man always turned his back to her. He seemed thinner, and his limber figure looked more slouching. But still it had the tender, attractive appearance, especially from behind. His tanned face, a little thinned and darkened, took a handsome, slightly sinister look.

" Come on, Joe ! " the corporal urged sharply one day. " What're you doing, boy? Looking for beetles on the bank ? "

Joe turned round swiftly, almost menacing, to work.

" He's a different fellow these days, Miss Stokes," said Albert to the young woman. " What's got him ? Is it Monkey-nuts that don't suit him, do you think ? "

" Choked with chaff, more like," she retorted. " It's as bad as feeding a threshing machine, to have to listen to some folks."

" As bad as what ? " said Albert. " You don't mean *me*, do you, Miss Stokes ? "

" No," she cried. " I don't mean you."

Joe's face became dark red during these sallies, but he said nothing. He would eye the young woman curiously, as she swung so easily at the work, and he had some of the look of a dog which is going to bite.

Albert, with his nerves on edge, began to find the strain rather severe. The next Saturday evening, when Joe came in more black-browed than ever, he watched him, determined to have it out with him.

When the boy went upstairs to bed, the corporal followed him. He closed the door behind him carefully, sat on the bed and watched the younger man undressing. And for once he spoke in a natural voice, neither chaffing nor commanding.

" What's gone wrong, boy ? "

Joe stopped a moment as if he had been shot. Then he went on unwinding his puttees, and did not answer or look up.

" You can hear, can't you ? " said Albert, nettled.

" Yes, I can hear," said Joe, stooping over his puttees till his face was purple.

" Then why don't you answer ? "

Joe sat up. He gave a long, sideways look at the corporal. Then he lifted his eyes and stared at a crack in the ceiling.

The corporal watched these movements shrewdly.

" And *then* what ? " he asked, ironically.

Again Joe turned and stared him in the face. The corporal smiled very slightly, but kindly.

" There'll be murder done one of these days," said Joe, in a quiet, unimpassioned voice.

" So long as it's by daylight—" replied Albert. Then he went over, sat down by Joe, put his hand on his shoulder affectionately, and continued, " What is it, boy ? What's gone wrong ? You can trust me, can t you ? "

Joe turned and looked curiously at the face so near to his.

" It's nothing, that's all," he said laconically.

Albert frowned.

" Then who's going to be murdered ?—

and who's going to do the murdering?—me or you—which is it, boy?" He smiled gently at the stupid youth, looking straight at him all the while, into his eyes. Gradually the stupid, hunted, glowering look died out of Joe's eyes. He turned his head aside, gently, as one rousing from a spell.

"I don't want her," he said, with fierce resentment.

"Then you needn't have her," said Albert. "What do you go for, boy?"

But it wasn't as simple as all that. Joe made no remark.

"She's a smart-looking girl. What's wrong with her, my boy? I should have thought you were a lucky chap, myself."

"I don't want 'er," Joe barked, with ferocity and resentment.

"Then tell her so and have done," said Albert. He waited awhile. There was no response. "Why don't you?" he added.

"Because I don't," confessed Joe, sulkily.

Albert pondered—rubbed his head.

"You're too soft-hearted, that's where it is, boy. You want your mettle dipping in cold water, to temper it. You're too soft-hearted——"

He laid his arm affectionately across the shoulders of the younger man. Joe seemed to yield a little towards him.

"When are you going to see her again?" Albert asked. For a long time there was no answer.

"When is it, boy?" persisted the softened voice of the corporal.

"To-morrow," confessed Joe.

"Then let me go," said Albert. "Let me go, will you?"

¶

THE morrow was Sunday, a sunny day, but a cold evening. The sky was grey, the new foliage very green, but the air was chilly and depressing. Albert walked briskly down the white road towards Beeley. He crossed a larch plantation, and followed a narrow by-road, where blue speedwell flowers fell from the banks into the dust. He walked swinging his cane, with mixed sensations. Then having gone a certain length, he turned and began to walk in the opposite direction.

So he saw a young woman approaching him. She was wearing a wide hat of grey straw, and a loose, swinging dress of nigger-grey velvet. She walked with slow inevitability. Albert faltered a little as he approached her. Then he saluted her, and his roguish, slightly withered skin flushed. She was staring straight into his face.

He fell in by her side, saying impudently:

"Not so nice for a walk as it was, is it?"

She only stared at him. He looked back at her.

"You've seen me before, you know," he said, grinning slightly. "Perhaps you never noticed me. Oh, I'm really quite nice looking, in a quiet way, you know. What——?"

But Miss Stokes did not speak: she only stared with large, icy blue eyes at him. He became self-conscious, lifted up his chin, walked with his nose in the air, and whistled at random. So they went down the quiet, deserted grey lane. He was whistling the air: 'I'm Gilbert, the filbert, the colonel of the nuts.'

At last she found her voice:

"Where's Joe?"

"He thought you'd like a change: they say variety's the salt of life—that's why I'm mostly in pickle."

"Where is he?"

"Am I my brother's keeper? He's gone his own ways."

"Where?"

"Nay, how am I to know? Not so far but he'll be back for supper."

She stopped in the middle of the lane. He stopped facing her.

"Where's Joe?" she asked.

He struck a careless attitude, looked down the road this way and that, lifted his eyebrows, pushed his khaki cap on one side, and answered:

"He is not conducting the service to-night: he asked me if I'd officiate."

"Why hasn't he come?"

"Didn't want to, I expect. *I* wanted to."

She stared him up and down, and he felt uncomfortable in his spine, but maintained his air of nonchalance. Then she turned slowly on her heel, and started to walk back. The corporal went at her side.

"You're not going back, are you?" he pleaded. "Why, me and you, we should get on like a house on fire."

She took no heed, but walked on. He went uncomfortably at her side, making his funny remarks from time to time. But she was as if stone deaf. He glanced at her, and to his dismay saw the tears running down her cheeks. He stopped suddenly.

"I say, you know——" he began.

But she was walking on like an automaton, and he had to hurry after her.

She never spoke to him. At the gate of her farm she walked straight in, as if he were not there. He watched her disappear. Then he turned on his heel, cursing silently, puzzled, lifting off his cap to scratch his head.

That night, when they were in bed, he remarked :

" Say, Joe, boy ; strikes me you're well-off without Monkey-nuts. Gord love us, beans ain't in it."

So they slept in amity. But they waited with some anxiety for the morrow.

It was a cold morning, a grey sky shifting in a cold wind, and threatening rain. They watched the wagon come up the road and through the yard gates. Miss Stokes was with her team as usual ; her " Whoa ! " rang out like a war-whoop.

She faced up at the truck where the two men stood.

" Joe ! " she called, to the averted figure which stood up in the wind.

" What ? " He turned unwillingly.

She made a queer movement, lifting her head slightly in a sipping, half-inviting, half-commanding gesture. And Joe was crouching already to jump off the truck to obey her, when Albert put his hand on his shoulder.

" Half a minute, boy ! Where are you off ? Work's work, and nuts is nuts. You stop here."

Joe slowly straightened himself.

" Joe ? " came the woman's clear call from below.

Again Joe looked at her. But Albert's hand was on his shoulder, detaining him. He stood half averted, with his tail between his legs.

" Take your hand off him, you ! " said Miss Stokes.

" Yes, Major," retorted Albert satirically.

She stood and watched.

" Joe ! " Her voice rang for the third time.

Joe turned and looked at her, and a slow jeering smile gathered on his face.

" Monkey-nuts ! " he replied, in a tone mocking her call.

She turned white—dead white. The men thought she would fall. Albert began yelling to the porters up the line to come and help with the load. He could yell like any non-commissioned officer upon occasion.

Some way or other the wagon was unloaded, the girl was gone. Joe and his corporal looked at one another and smiled slowly. But they had a weight on their minds, they were afraid.

They were reassured, however, when they found that Miss Stokes came no more with the hay. As far as they were concerned, she had vanished into oblivion. And Joe felt more relieved even than he had felt when he heard the firing cease, after the news had come that the armistice was signed.

THE ARGOSY VOTING COMPETITION

WE again offer two prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the readers who send in the titles of the four best stories in the order of merit which most nearly coincides with the votes of the majority. Stories must be selected from this issue.

Entries should be made on postcards addressed to : " Vote," THE ARGOSY, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4, and sent in by July 28, 1927. The result will be announced in THE ARGOSY for OCTOBER, on sale September 7, 1927.

We have pleasure in awarding a prize of Two Guineas to :

L. MALCOLM SMITH, Esq., 42, Tetherdown, Muswell Hill, N.10,

and a prize of One Guinea to :

Miss L. NEWLANDS, " Bemersyde," Farnham Royal, Bucks,

whose voting in the competition for June most nearly coincided with the majority.

The Heathen

An "unbeliever" who understood the great code

By JACK LONDON

I MET him first in a hurricane; and though we had gone through the hurricane on the same schooner, it was not until the schooner had gone to pieces under us that I first laid eyes on him. Without doubt I had seen him with the rest of the kanaka crew on board, but I had not consciously been aware of his existence, for the *Petite Jeanne* was rather overcrowded. In addition to her eight or ten kanaka seamen, her white captain, mate, and super-cargo, and her six cabin passengers, she sailed from Rangiroa with something like eighty-five deck-passengers—Paumotans and Tahitians, men, women, and children, each with a trade-box, to say nothing of sleeping-mats, blankets, and clothes-bundles.

The pearling season in the Paumotus was over, and all hands were returning to Tahiti. The six of us cabin passengers were pearl-buyers. Two were Americans, one was Ah Choon (the whitest Chinese I have ever known), one was a German, one was a Polish Jew, and I completed the half-dozen.

It had been a prosperous season. Not one of us had cause for complaint, nor one of the eighty-five deck-passengers either. All had done well, and all were looking forward to a rest-off and a good time in Papeete.

Of course, the *Petite Jeanne* was overloaded. She was only seventy tons, and she had no right to carry a tithe of the mob she had on board. Beneath her hatches she was crammed and jammed with pearl-shell and copra. Even the trade room was packed full with shell. It was a miracle that the sailors could work her. There was no moving about the decks. They simply climbed back and forth along the rails.

In the night-time they walked upon the sleepers, who carpeted the deck, I'll swear, two deep. Oh! and there were pigs and chickens on deck, and sacks of yams, while every conceivable place was festooned with strings of drinking cocoanuts and bunches of bananas. On both sides, between the fore and main shrouds, guys had been stretched, just low enough for the foreboom to swing clear; and from each of these guys at least fifty bunches of bananas were suspended.

It promised to be a messy passage, even if we did make it in the two or three days that would have been required if the south-east trades had been blowing fresh. But they weren't blowing fresh. After the first five hours the trade died away in a dozen or so gasping fans. The calm continued all that night and the next day—one of those glaring, glassy calms, when the very thought of opening one's eyes to look at it is sufficient to cause a headache.

The second day a man died—an Easter Islander, one of the best divers that season in the lagoon. Smallpox—that is what it was; though how smallpox could come on board, when there had been no known cases ashore when we left Rangiroa, is beyond me. There it was, though—smallpox, a man dead, and three others down on their backs.

There was nothing to be done. We could not segregate the sick, nor could we care for them. We were packed like sardines. There was nothing to do but rot and die—that is, there was nothing to do after the night that followed the first death. On that night, the mate, the supercargo, the Polish Jew, and four native divers sneaked away in the large whale-boat. They were never heard of again. In the morning the captain promptly scuttled the remaining boats, and there we were.

That day there were two deaths; the following day three; then it jumped to eight. It was curious to see how we took it. The natives, for instance, fell into a condition of dumb, stolid fear. The captain—Oudouse, his name was, a Frenchman—became very nervous and voluble. He actually got the twitches. He was a large, fleshy man, weighing at least two hundred pounds, and he quickly

became a faithful representation of a quivering jelly-mountain of fat.

The German, the two Americans, and myself bought up all the Scotch whisky, and proceeded to stay drunk. The theory was beautiful—namely, if we kept ourselves soaked in alcohol, every smallpox germ that came into contact with us would immediately be scorched to a cinder. And the theory worked, though I must confess that neither Captain Oudouse nor Ah Choon was attacked by the disease either. The Frenchman did not drink at all, while Ah Choon restricted himself to one drink daily.

It was a pretty time. The sun, going into northern declination, was straight overhead. There was no wind, except for frequent squalls, which blew fiercely for from five minutes to half an hour, and wound up by deluging us with rain. After each squall, the awful sun would come out, drawing clouds of steam from the soaked decks.

The steam was not nice. It was the vapour of death, freighted with millions and millions of germs. We always took another drink when we saw it going up from the dead and dying, and usually we took two or three more drinks, mixing them exceptionally stiff. Also, we made it a rule to take an additional several each time they hove the dead over to the sharks that swarmed about us.

We had a week of it, and then the whisky gave out. It is just as well, or I shouldn't be alive now. It took a sober man to pull through what followed, as you will agree when I mention the little fact that only two men did pull through. The other man was the heathen—at least, that was what I heard Captain Oudouse call him at the moment I first became aware of the heathen's existence. But to come back.

¶

IT was at the end of the week, with the whisky gone, and the pearl-buyers sober, that I happened to glance at the barometer that hung in the cabin companionway. Its normal register in the Paumotus was 29.90, and it was quite customary to see it vacillate between 29.85 and 30.00, or even 30.05; but to see it as I saw it, down to 29.62, was sufficient to sober the most drunken pearl-buyer that ever incinerated smallpox microbes in Scotch whisky.

I called Captain Oudouse's attention to it, only to be informed that he had watched it going down for several hours. There was little to do, but that little he did very well, considering the circumstances. He took off the light sails, shortened right down to storm canvas, spread life-lines, and waited for the wind. His mistake lay in what he did after the wind came. He hove to on the port tack, which was the right thing to do south of the Equator, if—and there was the rub—*if* one were *not* in the direct path of the hurricane.

We were in the direct path. I could see that by the steady increase of the wind and the equally steady fall of the barometer. I wanted him to turn and run with the wind on the port quarter until the barometer ceased falling, and then to heave to. We argued till he was reduced to hysteria, but budge he would not. The worst of it was that I could not get the rest of the pearl-buyers to back me up. Who was I, anyway, to know more about the sea and its ways than a properly qualified captain? was what was in their minds, I knew.

Of course the sea rose with the wind frightfully; and I shall never forget the first three seas the *Petite Jeanne* shipped. She had fallen off, as vessels do at times when hove to, and the first sea made a clean breach. The life-lines were only for the strong and well, and little good were they even for them when the women and children, the bananas and cocoanuts, the pigs and trade-boxes, the sick and the dying, were swept along in a solid, screeching, groaning mass.

The second sea filled the *Petite Jeanne's* decks flush with the rails; and, as her stern sank down and her bow tossed skyward, all the miserable dunnage of life and luggage poured aft. It was a human torrent. They came head-first, feet-first, sidewise, rolling over and over, twisting, squirming, writhing and crumpling up. Now and again one caught a grip on a stanchion or a rope; but the weight of the bodies behind tore such grips loose.

One man I noticed fetch up, head on and square on, with the starboard-bitt. His head cracked like an egg. I saw what was coming, sprang on top of the cabin, and from there into the mainsail itself. Ah Choon and one of the Americans tried to follow me, but I was one jump ahead of them. The American was swept away and over the stern like a piece of chaff. Ah Choon caught a spoke of the wheel, and swung in behind it. But a strapping

Raratonga vahine (woman)—she must have weighed two hundred and fifty—brought up against him, and got an arm around his neck. He clutched the kanaka steersman with the other hand; and just at that moment the schooner flung down to starboard.

The rush of bodies and sea that was coming along the port runway between the cabin and the rail turned abruptly and poured to starboard. Away they went—vahine, Ah Choon, and steersman; and I swear I saw Ah Choon grin at me with philosophic resignation as he cleared the rail and went under.

The third sea—the biggest of the three—did not do so much damage. By the time it arrived nearly everybody was in the rigging. On deck perhaps a dozen gasping, half-drowned, and half-stunned wretches were rolling about or attempting to crawl into safety. They went by the board, as did the wreckage of the two remaining boats. The other pearl-buyers and myself, between seas, managed to get about fifteen women and children into the cabin, and battened down. Little good it did the poor creatures in the end.

Wind? Out of all my experience I could not have believed it possible for the wind to blow as it did. There is no describing it. How can one describe a nightmare? It was the same way with that wind. It tore the clothes off our bodies. I say *tore them off*, and I mean it. I am not asking you to believe it. I am merely telling something that I saw and felt. There are times when I do not believe it myself. I went through it, and that is enough. One could not face that wind and live. It was a monstrous thing, and the most monstrous thing about it was that it increased and continued to increase.

Imagine countless millions and billions of tons of sand. Imagine this sand tearing along at ninety, a hundred, a hundred and twenty, or any other number of miles per hour. Imagine, further, this sand to be invisible, impalpable, yet to retain all the weight and density of sand. Do all this, and you may get a vague inkling of what that wind was like.

Perhaps sand is not the right comparison. Consider it mud, invisible, impalpable, but heavy as mud. Nay, it goes beyond that. Consider every molecule of air to be a mud-bank in itself. Then try to imagine the multitudinous impact of mud-banks. No; it is beyond me. Language may be adequate to express the ordinary conditions of life, but it cannot possibly express any of the conditions of so enormous a blast of wind. It would have been better had I stuck by my original intention of not attempting a description.

I will say this much: The sea, which had risen at first, was beaten down by that wind. More: it seemed as if the whole ocean had been sucked up in the maw of the hurricane, and hurled on through that portion of space which previously had been occupied by the air.

Of course, our canvas had gone long before. But Captain Oudouse had on the *Petite Jeanne* something I had never before seen on a South Sea schooner—a sea-anchor. It was a conical canvas bag, the mouth of which was kept open by a huge hoop of iron. The sea-anchor was bridled something like a kite, so that it bit into the water as a kite bites into the air, but with a difference. The sea-anchor remained just under the surface of the ocean in a perpendicular position. A long line, in turn, connected it with the schooner. As a result, the *Petite Jeanne* rode bow on to the wind and to what sea there was.

The situation really would have been favourable had we not been in the path of the storm. True, the wind itself tore our canvas out of the gaskets, jerked out our topmasts, and made a raffle of our running-gear, but still we would have come through nicely had we not been square in front of the advancing storm-centre. That was what fixed us. I was in a state of stunned, numbed, paralysed collapse from enduring the impact of the wind, and I think I was just about ready to give up and die when the centre smote us. The blow we received was an absolute lull. There was not a breath of air. The effect on one was sickening.

Remember that for hours we had been at terrific muscular tension, withstanding the awful pressure of that wind. And then, suddenly, the pressure was removed. I know that I felt as though I was about to expand, to fly apart in all directions. It seemed as if every atom composing my body was repelling every other atom and was on the verge of rushing off irresistibly into space. But that lasted only for a moment. Destruction was upon us.

In the absence of the wind and pressure the sea rose. It jumped, it leaped, it soared

straight toward the clouds. Remember, from every point of the compass that inconceivable wind was blowing in toward the centre of calm. The result was that the seas sprang up from every point of the compass. There was no wind to check them. They popped up like corks released from the bottom of a pail of water. There was no system to them, no stability. They were hollow, maniacal seas. They were eighty feet high at the least. They were not seas at all. They resembled no sea a man had ever seen.

They were splashes, monstrous splashes—that is all. Splashes that were eighty feet high. Eighty! They were more than eighty. They went over our mastheads. They were spouts, explosions. They were drunken. They fell anywhere, anyhow. They jostled one another; they collided. They rushed together and collapsed upon one another, or fell apart like a thousand waterfalls all at once. It was no ocean any man had ever dreamed of, that hurricane centre. It was confusion thrice confounded. It was anarchy. It was a hell-pit of sea-water gone mad.

The *Petite Jeanne?* I don't know. The heathen told me afterwards that he did not know. She was literally torn apart, ripped wide open, beaten into a pulp, smashed into kindling wood, annihilated. When I came to I was in the water, swimming automatically, though I was about two-thirds drowned. How I got there I had no recollection. I remembered seeing the *Petite Jeanne* fly to pieces at what must have been the instant that my own consciousness was buffeted out of me. But there I was, with nothing to do but make the best of it, and in that best there was little promise. The wind was blowing again, the sea was much smaller and more regular, and I knew that I had passed through the centre. Fortunately, there were no sharks about. The hurricane had dissipated the ravenous horde that had surrounded the death ship and fed off the dead.

¶

IT was about midday when the *Petite Jeanne* went to pieces, and it must have been two hours afterwards when I picked up with one of her hatch-covers. Thick rain was driving at the time; and it was the merest chance that flung me and the hatch-cover together. A short length of line was trailing from the rope handle; and I knew that I was good for a day, at least, if the sharks did not return. Three hours later, possibly a little longer, sticking close to the cover, and, with closed eyes, concentrating my whole soul upon the task of breathing in enough air to keep me going and at the same time of avoiding breathing in enough water to drown me, it seemed to me that I heard voices. The rain had ceased, and wind and sea were easing marvellously. Not twenty feet away from me, on another hatch-cover, were Captain Oudouse and the heathen. They were fighting over the possession of the cover—at least the Frenchman was.

"Païen noir!" I heard him scream, and at the same time I saw him kick the kanaka.

Now, Captain Oudouse had lost all his clothes, except his shoes, and they were heavy brogans. It was a cruel blow, for it caught the heathen on the mouth and the point of the chin, half stunning him. I looked for him to retaliate, but he contented himself with swimming about forlornly a safe ten feet away. Whenever a fling of the sea threw him closer, the Frenchman, hanging on with his hands, kicked out at him with both feet. Also, at the moment of delivering each kick, he called the kanaka a black heathen.

"For two centimes I'd come over there and drown you, you white beast!" I yelled.

The only reason I did not go was that I felt too tired. The very thought of the effort to swim over was nauseating. So I called to the kanaka to come to me, and proceeded to share the hatch-cover with him. Otoo, he told me his name was (pronounced ō-tō-ō); also, he told me that he was a native of Bora Bora, the most westerly of the Society Group. As I learned afterwards, he had got the hatch-cover first, and, after some time, encountering Captain Oudouse, had offered to share it with him, and had been kicked off for his pains.

And that was how Otoo and I first came together. He was no fighter. He was all sweetness and gentleness, a love-creature, though he stood nearly six feet tall and was muscled like a gladiator. He was no fighter, but he was also no coward. He had the heart of a lion; and in the years that followed I have seen him run risks that I would never dream of taking. What I mean is that while he was no fighter, and while he always avoided precipitating a row, he never ran away from trouble when it started.

And it was " 'Ware shoal ! " when once Otoo went into action. I shall never forget what he did to Bill King. It occurred in German Samoa. Bill King was hailed the champion heavyweight of the American Navy. He was a big brute of a man, a veritable gorilla, one of those hard-hitting, rough-housing chaps, and clever with his fists as well. He picked the quarrel, and he kicked Otoo twice and struck him once before Otoo felt it to be necessary to fight. I don't think it lasted four minutes, at the end of which time Bill King was the unhappy possessor of four broken ribs, a broken forearm, and a dislocated shoulder-blade. Otoo knew nothing of scientific boxing. He was merely a manhandler ; and Bill King was something like three months in recovering from the bit of manhandling he received that afternoon on Apia beach.

¶

BUT I am running ahead of my yarn. We shared the hatch-cover between us. We took turn and turn about, one lying flat on the cover and resting, while the other, submerged to the neck, merely held on with his hands. For two days and nights, spell and spell, on the cover and in the water, we drifted over the ocean. Toward the last I was delirious most of the time ; and there were times, too, when I heard Otoo babbling and raving in his native tongue. Our continuous immersion prevented us from dying of thirst, though the sea-water and the sunshine gave us the prettiest imaginable combination of salt pickle and sunburn.

In the end, Otoo saved my life ; for I came to lying on the beach twenty feet from the water, sheltered from the sun by a couple of cocoanut leaves. No one but Otoo could have dragged me there and stuck up the leaves for shade. He was lying beside me. I went off again ; and the next time I came round, it was cool and starry night, and Otoo was pressing a drinking cocoanut to my lips.

We were the sole survivors of the *Petite Jeanne*. Captain Oudouse must have succumbed to exhaustion, for several days later his hatch-cover drifted ashore without him. Otoo and I lived with the natives of the atoll for a week, when we were rescued by the French cruiser, and taken to Tahiti. In the meantime, however, we had performed the ceremony of exchanging names. In the South Seas such a ceremony binds two men closer together than blood-brothership. The initiative had been mine ; and Otoo was rapturously delighted when I suggested it.

" It is well," he said, in Tahitian. " For we have been mates together for two days on the lips of Death."

" But Death stuttered," I smiled.

" It was a brave deed you did, master," he replied, " and Death was not vile enough to speak."

" Why do you ' master ' me ? " I demanded, with a show of hurt feelings. " We have exchanged names. To you I am Otoo. To me you are Charley. And between you and me, for ever and for ever, you shall be Charley, and I shall be Otoo. It is the way of the custom. And when we die, if it does happen that we live again somewhere beyond the stars and the sky, still shall you be Charley to me, and I Otoo to you ! "

" Yes, master," he answered, his eyes luminous and soft with joy.

" There you go ! " I cried indignantly.

" What does it matter what my lips utter ? " he argued. " They are only my lips. But I shall think Otoo always. Whenever I think of myself, I shall think of you. Whenever men call me by name, I shall think of you. And beyond the sky and beyond the stars, always and for ever, you shall be Otoo to me. Is it well, master?"

I hid my smile, and answered that it was well.

We parted at Papeete. I remained ashore to recuperate ; and he went on in a cutter to his own island, Bora Bora. Six weeks later he was back. I was surprised, for he had told me of his wife, and said that he was returning to her, and would give over sailing on far voyages.

" Where do you go, master ? " he asked, after our first greetings.

I shrugged my shoulders. It was a hard question.

" All the world," was my answer—" all the world, all the sea, and all the islands that are in the sea."

" I will go with you," he said simply. " My wife is dead."

I never had a brother ; but from what I have seen of other men's brothers, I doubt if any man ever had a brother that was to him what Otoo was to me. He was brother and father and mother as well. And this I know : I lived a straighter and better man because of Otoo. I cared little for other

men, but I had to live straight in Otoo's eyes. Because of him I dared not tarnish myself. He made me his ideal, compounding me, I fear, chiefly out of his own love and worship; and there were times when I stood close to the steep pitch of hell, and would have taken the plunge had not the thought of Otoo restrained me. His pride in me entered into me, until it became one of the major rules in my personal code to do nothing that would diminish that pride of his.

Naturally, I did not learn right away what his feelings were toward me. He never criticised, never censured; and slowly the exalted place I held in his eyes dawned upon me, and slowly I grew to comprehend the hurt I could inflict upon him by being anything less than my best.

For seventeen years we were together; for seventeen years he was at my shoulder, watching while I slept, nursing me through fever and wounds—ay, and receiving wounds in fighting for me. He signed on the same ships with me; and together we ranged the Pacific from Hawaii to Sydney Head, and from Torres Straits to the Galapagos. We blackbirded from the New Hebrides and the Line Islands over to the westward clear through the Louisades, New Britain, New Ireland, and New Hanover. We were wrecked three times—in the Gilberts, in the Santa Cruz group, and in the Fijis. And we traded and salved wherever a dollar promised in the way of pearl and pearl-shell, copra, bêche-de-mer, hawkbill turtle-shell, and stranded wrecks.

It began in Papeete, immediately after his announcement that he was going with me over all the sea, and the islands in the midst thereof. There was a club in those days in Papeete, where the pearlers, traders, captains, and riffraff of South Sea adventurers foregathered. The play ran high, and the drink ran high; and I am very much afraid that I kept later hours than were becoming or proper. No matter what the hour was when I left the club, there was Otoo waiting to see me safely home.

At first I smiled; next I chided him. Then I told him flatly that I stood in need of no wet-nursing. After that I did not see him when I came out of the club. Quite by accident, a week or so later, I discovered that he still saw me home, lurking across the street among the shadows of the mango-trees. What could I do? I know what I did do.

Insensibly I began to keep better hours. On wet and stormy nights, in the thick of the folly and the fun, the thought would persist in coming to me of Otoo keeping his dreary vigil under the dripping mangoes. Truly, he made a better man of me. Yet he was not strait-laced. And he knew nothing of common Christian morality. All the people on Bora Bora were Christians; but he was a heathen, the only unbeliever on the island, a gross materialist, who believed that when he died he was dead. He believed merely in fair play and square dealing. Petty meanness, in his code, was almost as serious as wanton homicide; and I do believe that he respected a murderer more than a man given to small practices.

¶

CONCERNING me, personally, he objected to my doing anything that was hurtful to me. Gambling was all right. He was an ardent gambler himself. But late hours, he explained, were bad for one's health. He had seen men who did not take care of themselves die of fever. He was no teetotaller, and welcomed a stiff nip any time when it was wet work in the boats. On the other hand, he believed in liquor in moderation. He had seen many men killed or disgraced by square-face or Scotch.

Otoo had my welfare always at heart. He thought ahead for me, weighed my plans, and took a greater interest in them than I did myself. At first, when I was unaware of this interest of his in my affairs, he had to divine my intentions, as, for instance, at Papeete, when I contemplated going partners with a knavish fellow-countryman on a guano venture. I did not know he was a knave. Nor did any white man in Papeete. Neither did Otoo know, but he saw how thick we were getting, and found out for me, and without my asking him. Native sailors from the ends of the seas knock about on the beach in Tahiti; and Otoo, suspicious merely, went among them till he had gathered sufficient data to justify his suspicions. Oh, it was a nice history, that of Randolph Waters. I couldn't believe it when Otoo first narrated it; but when I sheeted it home to Waters he gave in without a murmur, and got away on the first steamer to Auckland.

At first, I am free to confess, I couldn't help resenting Otoo's poking his nose into my business. But I knew that he was

wholly unselfish; and soon I had to acknowledge his wisdom and discretion. He had his eyes open always to my main chance, and he was both keen-sighted and far-sighted. In time he became my counsellor, until he knew more of my business than I did myself. He really had my interest at heart more than I had. Mine was the magnificent carelessness of youth, for I preferred romance to dollars, and adventure to a comfortable billet with all night in. So it was well that I had someone to look out for me. I know that if it had not been for Otoo, I should not be here to-day.

Of numerous instances, let me give one. I had had some experience in blackbirding before I went pearling in the Paumotus. Otoo and I were on the beach in Samoa—we really were on the beach and hard aground—when my chance came to go as recruiter on a blackbird brig. Otoo signed on before the mast; and for the next half-dozen years, in as many ships,we knocked about the wildest portions of Melanesia. Otoo saw to it that he always pulled stroke-oar in my boat. Our custom in recruiting labour was to land the recruiter on the beach. The covering boat always lay on its oars several hundred feet off shore, while the recruiter's boat, also lying on its oars, kept afloat on the edge of the beach. When I landed with my trade-goods, leaving my steering sweep apeak, Otoo left his stroke position and came into the stern-sheets, where a Winchester lay ready to hand under a flap of canvas. The boat's crew was also armed, the Sniders concealed under canvas flaps that ran the length of the gunwales.

While I was busy arguing and persuading the woolly-headed cannibals to come and labour on the Queensland plantations Otoo kept watch. And often and often his low voice warned me of suspicious actions and impending treachery. Sometimes it was the quick shot from his rifle, knocking a nigger over, that was the first warning I received. And in my rush to the boat his hand was always there to jerk me flying aboard. Once, I remember, on *Santa Anna*, the boat grounded just as the trouble began. The covering boat was dashing to our assistance, but the several score of savages would have wiped us out before it arrived. Otoo took a flying leap ashore, dug both hands into the trade-goods, and scattered tobacco, beads, tomahawks, knives, and calicoes in all directions.

This was too much for the woolly-heads. While they scrambled for the treasures, the boat was shoved clear, and we were aboard and forty feet away. And I got thirty recruits off that very beach in the next four hours.

¶

THE particular instance I have in mind was on Malaita, the most savage island in the easterly Solomons. The natives had been remarkably friendly; and how were we to know that the whole village had been taking up a collection for over two years with which to buy a white man's head? The beggars are all head-hunters, and they especially esteem a white man's head. The fellow who captured the head would receive the whole collection. As I say, they appeared very friendly; and on this day I was fully a hundred yards down the beach from the boat. Otoo had cautioned me; and, as usual when I did not heed him, I came to grief.

The first I knew, a cloud of spears sailed out of the mangrove swamp at me. At least a dozen were sticking into me. I started to run, but tripped over one that was fast in my calf, and went down. The woolly-heads made a run for me, each with a long-handled, fantail tomahawk with which to hack off my head. They were so eager for the prize that they got in one another's way. In the confusion, I avoided several hacks by throwing myself right and left on the sand.

Then Otoo arrived—Otoo the man-handler. In some way he had got hold of a heavy war club, and at close quarters it was a far more efficient weapon than a rifle. He was right in the thick of them so that they could not spear him, while their tomahawks seemed worse than useless. He was fighting for me, and he was in a true Berserker rage. The way he handled that club was amazing. Their skulls squashed like overripe oranges. It was not until he had driven them back, picked me up in his arms, and started to run, that he received his first wounds. He arrived in the boat with four spear thrusts, got his Winchester, and with it got a man for every shot. Then we pulled aboard the schooner and doctored up.

Seventeen years we were together. He made me. I should to-day be a supercargo, a recruiter, or a memory, if it had not been for him.

"You spend your money, and you go

out and get more," he said one day. " It is easy to get money now. But when you get old, your money will be spent, and you will not be able to go out and get more. I know, master. I have studied the way of white men. On the beaches are many old men who were young once, and who could get money just like you. Now they are old, and they have nothing, and they wait about for the young men like you to come ashore and buy drinks for them.

" The black boy is a slave on the plantations. He gets twenty dollars a year. He works hard. The overseer does not work hard. He rides a horse and watches the black boy work. He gets twelve hundred dollars a year. I am a sailor on the schooner. I get fifteen dollars a month. That is because I am a good sailor. I work hard. The captain has a double awning, and drinks beer out of long bottles. I have never seen him haul a rope or pull an oar. He gets one hundred and fifty dollars a month. I am a sailor. He is a navigator. Master, I think it would be very good for you to know navigation."

Otoo spurred me on to it. He sailed with me as second mate on my first schooner, and he was far prouder of my command than I was myself. Later on it was :

" The captain is well paid, master ; but the ship is in his keeping, and he is never free from the burden. It is the owner who is better paid—the owner who sits ashore with many servants and turns his money over."

" True, but a schooner costs five thousand dollars—an old schooner at that," I objected. " I should be an old man before I saved five thousand dollars."

" There be short ways for white men to make money," he went on, pointing as[illegible] at the cocoanut-fringed beach.

We were in the Solomons at the time, picking up a cargo of ivory-nuts along the east coast of Guadalcanar.

" Between this river mouth and the next it is two miles," he said. " The flat land runs far back. It is worth nothing now. Next year—who knows ?—or the year after, men will pay much money for that land. The anchorage is good. Big steamers can lie close up. You can buy the land four miles deep from the old chief for ten thousand sticks of tobacco, ten bottles of square-face, and a Snider, which will cost you, maybe, one hundred dollars. Then you place the deed with the commissioner ; and the next year, or the year after, you sell and become the owner of a ship."

I followed his lead, and his words came true, though in three years, instead of two. Next came the grasslands deal on Guadalcanar—twenty thousand acres, on a governmental nine hundred and ninety-nine years' lease at a nominal sum. I owned the lease for precisely ninety days, when I sold it to a company for half a fortune. Always it was Otoo who looked ahead and saw the opportunity. He was responsible for the salving of the *Doncaster*—bought in at auction for a hundred pounds, and clearing three thousand after every expense was paid. He led me into the Savaii plantation and the cocoa venture on Upolu.

¶

WE did not go seafaring so much as in the old days. I was too well off. I married, and my standard of living rose ; but Otoo remained the same old-time Otoo, moving about the house or trailing through the office, his wooden pipe in his mouth, a shilling under-shirt on his back, and a four-shilling lava-lava about his loins. I could not get him to spend money. There was no way of repaying him except with love, and God knows he got that in full measure from all of us. The children worshipped him ; and if he had been spoilable, my wife would surely have been his undoing.

The children ! He really was the one who showed them the way of their feet in the world practical. He began by teaching them to walk. He sat up with them when they were sick. One by one, when they were scarcely toddlers, he took them down to the lagoon, and made them into amphibians. He taught them more than I ever knew of the habits of fish and the ways of catching them. In the bush it was the same thing. At seven, Tom knew more woodcraft than I ever dreamed existed. At six, Mary went over the Sliding Rock without a quiver, and I have seen strong men balk at that feat. And when Frank had just turned six he could bring up shillings from the bottom in three fathoms.

" My people in Bora Bora do not like heathen—they are all Christians ; and I do not like Bora Bora Christians," he said one day, when I, with the idea of getting him to spend some of the money that was rightfully his, had been trying to persuade

him to make a visit to his own island in one of our schooners—a special voyage which I had hoped to make a record breaker in the matter of prodigal expense.

I say one of *our* schooners, though legally at the time they belonged to me. I struggled long with him to enter into partnership.

"We have been partners from the day the *Petite Jeanne* went down," he said at last. "But if your heart so wishes, then shall we become partners by the law. I have no work to do, yet are my expenses large. I drink and eat and smoke in plenty—it costs much, I know. I do not pay for the playing of billiards, for I play on your table; but still the money goes. Fishing on the reef is only a rich man's pleasure. It is shocking, the cost of hooks and cotton line. Yes; it is necessary that we be partners by the law. I need the money. I shall get it from the head clerk in the office."

So the papers were made out and recorded. A year later I was compelled to complain.

"Charley," said I, "you are a wicked old fraud, a miserly skinflint, a miserable land-crab. Behold, your share for the year in all our partnership has been thousands of dollars. The head clerk has given me this paper. It says that in the year you have drawn just eighty-seven dollars and twenty cents."

"Is there any owing me?" he asked anxiously.

"I tell you thousands and thousands," I answered.

His face brightened, as with an immense relief.

"It is well," he said. "See that the head clerk keeps good account of it. When I want it, I shall want it, and there must not be a cent missing.

"If there is," he added fiercely, after a pause, "it must come out of the clerk's wages."

And all the time, as I afterwards learned, his will, drawn up by Carruthers, and making me sole beneficiary, lay in the American consul's safe.

¶

BUT the end came, as the end must come to all human associations. It occurred in the Solomons, where our wildest work had been done in the wild young days, and where we were once more—principally on a holiday, incidentally to look after our holdings on Florida Island and to look over the pearling possibilities of the Mboli Pass. We were lying at Savo, having run in to trade for curios.

Now, Savo is alive with sharks. The custom of the woolly-heads of burying their dead in the sea did not tend to discourage the sharks from making the adjacent waters a hang-out. It was my luck to be coming aboard in a tiny, overloaded, native canoe, when the thing capsized. There were four woolly-heads and myself in it, or rather hanging to it. The schooner was a hundred yards away. I was just hailing for a boat when one of the woolly-heads began to scream. Holding on to the end of the canoe, both he and that portion of the canoe were dragged under several times. Then he loosed his clutch and disappeared. A shark had got him.

The three remaining niggers tried to climb out of the water upon the bottom of the canoe. I yelled and cursed and struck at the nearest with my fist, but it was no use. They were in a blind funk. The canoe could barely have supported one of them. Under the three it upended and rolled sidewise, throwing them back into the water.

I abandoned the canoe and started to swim toward the schooner, expecting to be picked up by the boat before I got there. One of the niggers elected to come with me, and we swam along silently, side by side, now and again putting our faces into the water and peering about for sharks. The screams of the man who stayed by the canoe informed us that he was taken. I was peering into the water when I saw a big shark pass directly beneath me. He was full sixteen feet in length. I saw the whole thing. He got the woolly-head by the middle, and away he went, the poor devil, head, shoulders, and arms out of water all the time, screeching in a heart-rending way. He was carried along in this fashion for several hundred feet, when he was dragged beneath the surface.

I swam doggedly on, hoping that that was the last unattached shark. But there was another. Whether it was one that had attacked the natives earlier, or whether it was one that had made a good meal elsewhere, I do not know. At any rate, he was not in such haste as the others. I could not swim so rapidly now, for a large part of my effort was devoted to keeping track of him. I was watching him when he made his first attack. By good luck I got both

hands on his nose, and, though his momentum nearly shoved me under, I managed to keep him off. He veered clear, and began circling about again. A second time I escaped him by the same manœuvre. The third rush was a miss on both sides. He sheered at the moment my hands should have landed on his nose, but his sandpaper hide (I had on a sleeveless undershirt) scraped the skin off one arm from elbow to shoulder.

By this time I was played out, and gave up hope. The schooner was still two hundred feet away. My face was in the water, and I was watching him manœuvre for another attempt, when I saw a brown body pass between us. It was Otoo.

"Swim for the schooner, master!" he said. And he spoke gaily, as though the affair was a mere lark. "I know sharks. The shark is my brother."

I obeyed, swimming slowly on, while Otoo swam about me, keeping always between me and the shark, foiling his rushes and encouraging me.

"The davit tackle carried away, and they are rigging the falls," he explained, a minute or so later, and then went under to head off another attack.

¶

BY the time the schooner was thirty feet away I was about done for. I could scarcely move. They were heaving lines at us from on board, but they continually fell short. The shark, finding that it was receiving no hurt, had become bolder. Several times it nearly got me, but each time Otoo was there just the moment before it was too late. Of course, Otoo could have saved himself any time. But he stuck by me.

"Good-bye, Charley! I'm finished!" I just managed to gasp.

I knew that the end had come, and that the next moment I should throw up my hands and go down.

But Otoo laughed in my face, saying:

"I will show you a new trick. I will make that shark feel sick!"

He dropped in behind me, where the shark was preparing to come at me.

"A little more to the left!" he next called out. "There is a line there on the water. To the left, master—to the left!"

I changed my course and struck out blindly. I was by that time barely conscious. As my hand closed on the line I heard an exclamation from on board. I turned and looked. There was no sign of Otoo. The next instant he broke surface. Both hands were off at the wrist, the stumps spouting blood.

"Otoo!" he called softly. And I could see in his gaze the love that thrilled in his voice.

Then, and then only, at the very last of all our years, he called me that name.

"Good-bye, Otoo!" he called.

Then he was dragged under, and I was hauled aboard, where I fainted in the captain's arms.

And so passed Otoo, who saved me and made me a man, and who saved me in the end. We met in the maw of a hurricane, and parted in the maw of a shark, with seventeen intervening years of comradeship, the like of which I dare to assert has never befallen two men, the one brown and the other white. If Jehovah be from His high place watching every sparrow fall, not least in His kingdom shall be Otoo, the one heathen of Bora Bora.

¶ AMONG the contributions to CASSELL'S MAGAZINE for JULY (price 1/-) are brilliant stories by many popular authors, including Max Pemberton, Frank H. Shaw, Norman Venner, Owen Oliver and Warwick Deeping.

¶ ARTICLES are contributed by Stacy Aumonier, H. Ashton Wolfe and Charles Johns, the well-known British Golf Professional.

¶ THIS issue of CASSELL'S MAGAZINE is now on sale.

The Keg of Brandy

Was it murder?

By GUY DE MAUPASSANT

(*Specially translated for the* ARGOSY *by Mrs. Marjorie Laurie*)

MAÎTRE CHICOT, the inn-keeper from Epreville, drew up his tilbury in front of Mother Magloire's farm. He was a big, hearty fellow of forty, red-faced and tending to corpulence, and had something of a reputation for sharp practice.

He tied up his horse to the gatepost and entered the farmyard. He had long coveted the old lady's fields, which adjoined some property of his own; he had made a score of efforts to purchase them, but Mother Magloire obstinately refused to negotiate.

"Here I was born," she said, "here will I die."

He found her peeling potatoes before the door. She was seventy-two years old, dried up, wrinkled, bent, but she worked as indefatigably as any young girl. Chicot gave her a friendly slap on the back, and sat down beside her on a stool.

"Well, Mother, how are you keeping? All right?"

"Not too bad. And you, Maître Prosper?"

"Except for a twinge or two now and then, I'm first-rate."

"Well, that's good."

She said nothing more. Chicot watched her working at her task. Her crooked, knotted fingers, as hard as the claws of a crab, closed like pincers upon the potatoes in the hamper. She turned them about briskly in one hand, paring off the long strips of peel with an old knife which she held in the other. As each potato was peeled, she threw it into a pail of water. Three fowls came up boldly, one after another, as far as her petticoats, and when they had seized their shred of potato skin, scuttled away at full speed, with their booty in their beaks.

Chicot seemed ill-at-ease and anxious. He had something on the tip of his tongue, but it would not get any further. He was obviously hesitating. At last, however, he made up his mind.

"I say, Mother——"

"Yes. What can I do for you?"

"That farm of yours. You're still determined not to let me have it?"

"You can't have it. You can make up your mind to it. It's no use your harping on that subject. It's settled. Settled."

"I think I've discovered a plan that might suit both of us."

"What is it?"

"This is my scheme. You sell me the property, but you keep it in your own hands all the same. You don't catch the idea? Well, just listen and I'll explain."

The old woman stopped peeling her potatoes and looked hard at the inn-keeper. Her eyes gleamed between her puckered eyelids.

"Let me make it clear to you," he resumed. "I give you a hundred and fifty francs a month. Get that into your head. Every month I drive across here in my tilbury and bring you thirty five-franc pieces. It doesn't affect your position in the slightest. Not in the slightest. You stay in your own house, you don't pay any attention to me, you owe me nothing. All you have to do is to take my money. How does that strike you?"

He looked at her with an appearance of jovial good nature. The old woman reflected. She suspected a snare, and was trying to find where it lay. At last:

"That's what I get," she said. "But what about you? Do you take possession of the farm?"

"Don't you worry your head about that. You stay here as long as the good God leaves you alive. You will remain in your own house. All you have to do is to draw up a little deed at the notary's, giving me the reversion after your death. You have no children. Only some nephews, whom

you don't take much stock in. How does it strike you? You keep your property as long as you live, and I give you thirty five-franc pieces every month. It's all clear gain for you."

Alarmed, suspicious, but sorely tempted, the old woman, after a pause, replied:

"I don't say no. But I want to think about it. Come back some time next week and talk it over. I'll let you know then how it strikes me."

¶

WHEN Maître Chicot took his departure, he was as pleased as a king who has just conquered an empire. Mother Magloire however remained thoughtful. She had no sleep that night. For four days she lived in a fever of doubt. She scented unmistakable danger in the proposal, but the thought of those thirty five-franc pieces, those shining coins that would flow in a jingling stream into her apron, that would pour down on her as from heaven, filled her with a frenzy of avarice. At last she went and consulted the notary, who advised her to accept Chicot's proposal. He told her, however, to demand two hundred and fifty francs a month instead of one hundred and fifty, seeing that her farm was, on a moderate valuation, worth at least sixty thousand francs.

"Even if you live another fifteen years," said the notary, "that makes, at two hundred and fifty a month, only forty-five thousand that he will have paid."

The old woman was thrilled by the prospect of receiving fifty five-franc pieces every month, but her suspicions clung to her obstinately. She feared a thousand unforeseen things and lurking trickeries. She stayed on at the notary's until evening, putting question after question and unable to make up her mind to take her departure. At last, however, she instructed him to prepare the deed, and when she reached home her mind was as confused as if she had drunk four pots of new cider. When Chicot came for her answer, she let him go on for a long time making his supplications. She declared she would never consent, but all the time she was gnawed by a fear that he would not consent to give the fifty five-franc pieces. He succeeded at last in bringing her to the point, and she announced her terms, which, startled and disappointed, he refused to accept. In order to convince him, she set about calculating the probable duration of her life.

"I certainly shan't last more than another five or six years. I am just on seventy-three, and not too strong at that. The other night I thought I was done for. I had a sort of feeling that they had taken out my inside, and I had to be carried to my bed."

Chicot was not to be taken in by this.

"Come now, you old humbug, you're as solid as the church tower. You'll live to a hundred and ten at the least. It's you who will bury me, that's sure."

All the rest of the day was occupied in discussion, but Mother Magloire would not budge an inch, and finally Chicot consented to give the fifty five-franc pieces. On the following day the deed was signed, and Madame Magloire insisted on a further solatium of fifty francs.

Three years passed. Mother Magloire's health was perfect. She did not seem to have grown a day older. Chicot was in despair. It seemed to him as though these payments had been going on for half a century. He felt cheated, swindled, ruined. From time to time he paid a visit to Mother Magloire, in the frame of mind of a man who goes to his fields about harvest time to see whether his wheat is ripe for the sickle. There was a malicious joy in the old woman's eyes. She seemed to be congratulating herself on the pretty trick she had played him. He never tarried long, and when he climbed back into his tilbury he muttered:

"You old bag of bones, are you never going to die?"

The situation was beyond him. Whenever he saw her he longed to strangle her. He hated her with a fierce, sullen hatred, the hatred of the peasant for the man who has robbed him. Presently he set his wits to work, and at last, one day when he came to see her, he was rubbing his hands together, just as he had done the first time he brought her his proposal to buy the reversion of her farm. After a few minutes' conversation, he said:

"I say, Mother, why don't you come and have dinner at my house, when you are in Epreville? People are talking about it. They say we aren't friends any longer, and I don't like them saying that. You won't be asked to pay for anything at my house, you know. A dinner is nothing to me. Drop in whenever you feel inclined. Don't be shy. I'll always be glad to see you."

Mother Magloire did not need a second invitation. Two days later her man, Célestin, drove her in to market in her light covered cart, and she had no hesitation in putting up her horse in the stables of Chicot's inn. Then she claimed the dinner which had been promised her. Chicot was full of geniality, and treated her like a lady. He served her with chicken, black pudding, pork sausages, leg of mutton, and cabbage and bacon. But she had been accustomed from childhood to a meagre diet of soup with a slice of bread and butter, and she ate next to nothing. Chicot was disappointed and kept on pressing her. Nor would she take a glass of wine or even a cup of coffee.

" At any rate," he said, " you will have a nip of brandy."

" Ah, that's another thing. Yes. I won't say no to that."

He shouted at the top of his voice across the inn :

" Rosalie, bring brandy, the best brandy, the very best."

The maid fetched a long bottle, decorated with a paper vineleaf, and Chicot filled two small glasses.

" Taste that, Mother. It's first-rate stuff."

To make the pleasure last longer Mother Magloire took her glass of brandy in cautious sips. When it was empty she tilted it up so as to drain it to the last drop.

" Yes," she declared. " That's the stuff."

She had hardly spoken the words when Chicot poured her out a second glass. She would have stopped him, but was too late. The second glass was sipped with the same deliberation and enjoyment as the first. He begged her to drink yet a third glass, and again she protested, but he would have his way.

" This stuff is like milk, I assure you. I can take ten or twelve glasses without its going to my head. It is as mild as sugar. Nothing in the stomach, nothing in the head ; you would say it evaporated on the tongue. It is the best thing in the world for your health."

She yielded to her inclination and took another glass, but only drank half of it.

Then Chicot exclaimed in a burst of generosity :

" Look here, as you like this, I'll give you a little keg of it, just to show that we are still friends."

Mother Magloire did not refuse his offer. When she left the inn she was slightly intoxicated.

On the following day Chicot drove into Mother Magloire's farmyard and extracted from the bottom of his trap a small iron-hooped barrel. He insisted on her tasting the contents, to prove that it was the same as he had given her at the inn. When they had each had three glasses he got up to go.

" You know," he assured her, " as soon as the keg is empty there is plenty more where it came from. Make your mind easy about that. There's no stinginess about me. The sooner this is finished the better I shall be pleased."

He climbed into his tilbury. Four days later he came back again. Mother Magloire was busy in front of her door, cutting up bread for the soup. Chicot drew near to her, bade her good-day, and put his face close to hers when he spoke, so that he could smell her breath. When his nose recognised a whiff of alcohol, his face brightened up.

" You'll stand me a glass, won't you ? " he asked, and they had two or three together.

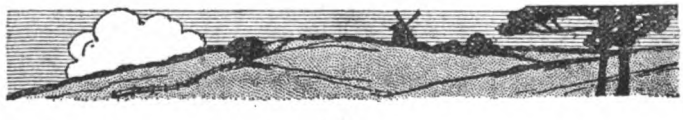
Soon it began to be rumoured in the country that Mother Magloire had taken to solitary drinking. She was found helpless in her kitchen and in her farmyard, and occasionally she was picked up on the roads in the neighbourhood, and had to be carried back to her house, as inert as a corpse. Chicot never went near her now, and whenever the old woman was mentioned, he replied, with a sad countenance :

" Isn't it a pity, at her age, to take up with that habit ? When you grow old, you see, there is nothing to be done. Sooner or later she will come to a bad end."

His prophecy was fulfilled.

Just before Christmas, the following winter, she got drunk and collapsed on the snow-covered ground, and there she died. Maître Chicot entered into possession of her farm.

" That old baggage," he would declare, " had ten good years of life left in her, if only she hadn't taken to drink."



Burberton and Ali Beg

Concerning a man who did not know his wealth

By TALBOT MUNDY

THE wet-and-dry-nursed turf of Hurlingham—sun-sweetened green velvet on a ground of iron—drummed to a devil's tattoo. There were other intermittent noises. Ponies and men breathed hard. About once in every thirty seconds the packed stands creaked under the strain; twenty thousand, of a class which keeps emotion underneath the surface, would grip the seats and sway—one way or the other all together—throat-gripped, hypnotized, by the game that is to all other games as wine to water.

Through the drumming of the hoofs—punctuating it—the *click-smack-click* of mallet-nose on whitened bamboo ball came at odd moments—now once, clean-clipped and hard, to be followed by thunder as the ponies wheeled and raced; now in a hail-storm clatter, with an underswish of whips as ponies tiptoed through a scrimmage nervously. Presently the crowd would sob again in unison, remembering at last to catch its breath.

"My conscience, but those gentlemen know how to lose!" said Margaret Brunton almost to herself, and Burberton, her American companion, came out of a dream. He, too, had been watching spellbound, and he felt a little bit ashamed of having let emotion get the better of him.

"Any man can learn to lose," he answered—sneering rather more than he intended. "They've lost. What would you have them do—lose their tempers? I vote we make a move, before the crowd starts rushing for the gate. Our men have won; there are only two more chukkas. There's no earthly chance that the other side can pull the game out of the fire now."

"I'm going to stay and see them try!" said Margaret. "You go if you like; Mr. Byng will see me home."

"I'm hanged if he will!" thought Burberton, with a sidelong glance at Sammy.

Samuel Hamilton-Byng—gentleman of means and quite illimitable leisure—was about the only bosom friend that Burberton owned to. Sammy was a joke; every living human being seemed to love him, but no man in his senses ever dreamed of coupling Sammy's name with that of a woman. And Norman Burberton prided himself on being in absolute possession of all his senses.

He had no illusions of any kind at all. He believed he could read human nature like a book, and he despised it in a rather good-natured, condescending way that he had inherited (without accessories) from "Old Man" Burberton, his father. Old Man Burberton had laughed, and taken what he wanted, leaving his only son more millions than were altogether good for him. Norman Burberton forgot to laugh as a rule, bought what he wanted, and grew tired of it.

He had no notion now that Margaret Brunton could conceivably prefer Sammy Byng to himself, and jealousy in any case was the passion he despised most. He was too masterful to be jealous. He had his father's absolute self-confidence, and a very considerable share of the railway magnate's judgment; he had decided, after calm reflection, during which he indulged in no vainglorious flights of imagination, that Margaret Brunton was waiting contentedly for him to propose to her in his own good time. He admired her patience, and paid her the compliment of treating Sammy's attentions to her as quite undangerous.

But it suited his purpose to see her home himself. It was in line with his acquisitiveness. She was the only desirable thing that his money had not bought him yet, and to have her with him in the front of his car—not yet his, but yet no other man's; his when he chose to ask—gave him more delight than he had ever gained from actual possession of anything. Sammy on a seat behind would add to his enjoyment, and

would serve to prevent the necessary other girl from interjecting conversation.

For all that he despised humanity so heartily, he liked the crowd to notice Margaret Brunton when she rode with him, and he had been conscious of a distinct feeling of irritation when the break-neck international polo game had drawn all eyes from her and her eyes away from him.

He had no interest in the game now. He believed in winning, and once won, the game ceased to interest him; he could not keep his attention on the last two chukkas, nor see any sense in waiting for the finish. He sat still and watched Margaret Brunton sideways, gloating—if the truth were known—over the thought of his ultimate possession of her, but to all outward seeming just a little bored, and quite indifferent.

Limb for limb—line for clean-bred line—he might have been blood-brother to any of the eight who were giving every good, grim ounce they owned on the drumming grass below. Those men were his crowd; the British four, too, would have acknowledged him their social equal as readily as his own countrymen did. And yet none of the eight could have been really his intimates. There was something about Burberton that seemed to check and dry up the opening confidence of every one, except Margaret Brunton and Sammy Byng—just as they two were like rays of sunshine to the rest of the world. Either team would have talked polo to Burberton as to an expert, and would have turned away at the first opportunity to laugh and be happy with Miss Brunton or Sammy, neither of whom knew a solitary thing about it.

It was perhaps his trouble, after all, that Norman Burberton knew too much and loved too little. He imagined that he loved the girl beside him, whereas all he was able to know, from practised observation, was that she was the sweetest, best-looking woman within his social horizon. And anybody could have told him that, without any of his worldly, thirty-year-old cynicism to help make comparisons.

He watched her appraisingly; as she leaned forward beside him, silhouetted against the black of someone's coat beyond, she might have been a cameo. Sammy—something of an Apollo on his own account, and every inch of him a dandy—suggested references to "Beauty and the Beast"; Burberton compared their features, as a connoisseur of jewels might judge one stone against a better one—and he looked like a connoisseur. They looked like happy children, all appreciative.

¶

WHEN the whistle blew at last and the blowing ponies trotted off the field to thunders of applause, Margaret Brunton sat still.

"Lord, look at the crowd!" said Burberton. "Why didn't we get away sooner?"

She looked at Sammy first, and then critically from him to Burberton, as if she was wondering where the difference lay; her lips were still slightly parted, her cheeks still glowing, her eyes still bright with the excitement of the game. So were Sammy's.

"I wouldn't have missed one minute of it! We can wait here until most of the crowd has gone, and then Mr. Byng has promised to bring one of the English team and introduce him."

"Heavens!" smiled Burberton, not ill-humouredly. He managed to infer a compliment. "Sammy's getting useful! Go on, Sam—fetch him."

Sammy, who sensed something in the atmosphere that was not absolutely peaceful—something faintly distasteful to his sunny disposition—was glad enough to go.

"Where did he meet any of the other team?" asked Burberton.

"When he was in India, I think. There must be something wonderful about that country. Mr. Byng came back quite different from what he was before he went away—and look at those officers! I'm told they learned all their polo in India. They certainly did learn how to lose like gentlemen."

"Do you mean that our fellows——"

"Your men won."

"I don't see how that makes them any——"

"They are 'your fellows,' and I'm glad they won. I always did think well of 'your fellows,' as you call them; and now I think even better of them. It makes me wonder how good they would be if they could all take a turn in India."

"India's got nothing to do with it!" said Burberton, with the air of a man of thirty who knows all there is to know. "Those four men are just natural-born polo-players—gentlemen—and they met a better team."

"I'd like to look at India," said Margaret musingly.

"Why not?" Burberton pricked up astonishingly. When an idea came to him, one could recognize his father's son. He glanced left and right—made sure that Sammy was not on the way back yet—and settled down, as a man sits tight down in the saddle when he means to test his horsemanship. "I've wanted to say this for a long time—been waiting for a chance to say it—didn't want to be banal and say the usual sort of things, and didn't want to *do* the usual thing, either. You've given me the idea."

"Wait!" said Margaret. "I think I know what you are going to say. I don't want you to say it. And yet—Norman—I would rather listen to you saying it than to any other man."

He did not answer. That was Burberton senior again. The old man had been famous for the art with which he reserved his verbal fire.

"I'm not comparing you, Norman, with any of those four men who played. If I could compare you with anybody, I would not have been seen about with you so much. But——"

"But what?"

"Every single one of those four men—and Mr. Byng besides—has got something which you haven't. You could get it—you could get it if you tried."

"What is it?"

She shook her head. "Can't you see?"

"If I could see something I wanted I would get it or go broke in the attempt. I was going to mention something that I want very much—and mean to have—when you cut me short."

"Do you really mean to have it?"

He nodded. "You know I do."

"Then find out what the other is and get it first. The rest will be easy."

"I hate riddles," he answered irritably. "Won't you tell me the answer?"

"You'll have to see it for yourself. I don't think I *can* make it clear to you. Only this—you'll have to find out that the world's worth living in before it will be worth living in, and before you can help make someone else's life worth living too. I want you to find it out for yourself. I'm sure Mr. Byng found it in India, for I saw the change in him when he came back. And now I've seen these four men play and lose, and I know they came from India, and—I may be wrong, but it has made me think."

"I can't see what you're driving at," said Burberton.

"I know you can't. I want you to be able to see *you*. You can't find it here, for you've got too much money and too few friends. Do you know anyone in India?"

"Not a soul."

"Perhaps that would be a good thing. I don't think Mr. Byng knew anybody—at all events until he got there."

Now, there are few things more exasperating to a man of mettle—and Burberton had more than the ordinary—than to be compared to his own disadvantage with a man whom he considers his inferior, in wealth and brain and pluck and sportsmanship and *savoir faire*. He liked Sammy Byng. He very nearly loved him. But he did it patronizingly.

"I'm getting tired of hearing about Byng!" he answered.

"And I'm getting very tired of waiting for him! There's Mrs. Boileau—look, she's beckoning. I'm going to ask her to take me home in her car—where's Mildred? There she is—now will you go and explain to Mr. Byng that I couldn't wait? And—and—won't you wait for him and take him home afterwards?"

Burberton, with the perfectly good grace that he knew well how to draw on over a feeling of discomfiture, walked with her to Mrs. Boileau's side, and later helped her into Mr. Boileau's huge blue touring-car.

"Got to wait for Sammy Byng," he explained, and not even that sharp-eyed scenter-out of social happenings could draw the least deduction from his manner. Sammy Byng, ten minutes later, was the first to get a glimpse below the surface.

"Come on home, you interminable ass!" he growled, seizing Sammy by the elbow.

"Why, won't she wait? He'll be out directly."

"She's gone with Mrs. Boileau."

Sammy did not raise his eyebrows—nor did he ask questions. The first remark of any kind came from Burberton, who was exceeding the speed limit and risking a fine, and he did not speak until London was in sight.

"Know anyone in India?" he asked.

"Yes. Know one man well. Why?"

"Give me an introduction to him, will you?"

Now Sammy's eyebrows did rise. "What's the use?" he asked. "My man's not a nabob."

" I asked it as a favour."

" Are you going to India, then ? "

" What else would I want the introduction for ? "

" Will you go and see him if I give it to you ? "

" What else would I do with it ? "

" Promise ? "

" Yes."

" It's yours. You'll like him if you stay long enough. Chap called Ommony. When d'you go ? "

" By the first ship that leaves London," said Burberton.

II

SO Norman Burberton began to study India—from the wrong end, and for six, toe-on-heel, hard-riding months he liked it. Men discovered he could ride and shoot as well as any of them, so things were pushed his way. He saw nothing of the mechanism—nothing of the insistent, sleepless maw that drains everlastingly the cleanest blood of England and gives back nothing but ideals. All he saw was surface glamour, and sub-surface poverty, and new ways of killing time that interested him until the novelty wore off.

He stuck pig in Gujerat and quitted himself handsomely ; a man who can do that may be forgiven six of all the seven sins, and his name went up and down the land in front of him. But it was all the same thing that he had known before, in a different setting—amusement, with a bad taste at the end of it.

He killed his tiger from the back of a rajah's elephant ; shot a rhino (and few but royalty and viceroys may do that) ; shot quail ; saw panthers fight to a ghastly, gory finish in a walled arena (that was in a native State, where Government had not penetrated into the roots of things) ; drank deep, as a welcome guest should, in the Gunners' Mess at Poona ; and stood, at the end of it all, unawed and dissatisfied, in front of the Taj Mahal by moonlight.

It was not the mystery of India that appealed to him ; he did not care for it, nor even realize it. It was another mystery.

These men—and most surely they were men—who drank with him and laughed with him, and rode neck and neck with him and risked their necks ; who showed him a hundred kinds of hospitality the West knows nothing of ; who spoke his language, drawled with the drawl that he had cultivated and drew his arbitrary line between what was sport and what was not, regarded him exactly as he had regarded his own world back at home. They accepted him because he was there and " a pretty decent sort," but that was all. There was not one man of all of them who was really interested in him, or who so much as lifted the curtain for a minute from the heart of things that held them all except himself.

And he could not find the heart of things, however hard he tried. They had no secrets from him, or none that he could lay his finger on. He heard them talking " shop " in the club rooms after dinner, and they were selfish and querulous and jealous of one another, just like other men. Few of them admitted any love for India. Most if not all of them were men who could have earned a more than decent living anywhere, at almost anything they chose, and many of them were men of considerable private means.

He saw men sickening with fever and anæmia and all the other ailments that the Indian sun draws out of the polluted soil, and he saw other men who had sickened and gone home, and returned again for more. And he learned there was nothing in it for anybody except a pension should he live to draw it.

They liked or hated one another ; but they always understood. And invariably —always, all the time, drunk, or sober, or at play—they treated him as someone who could not begin to understand.

" I suppose you're going to write a book on India when you get back ? " asked a judge of the Punjab High Court.

It was the dozenth time that he had been asked that question.

" Would you read it if I did ? "

" Certainly. It's good to see ourselves as others see us—keeps our perspective right. I get clippings regularly from the American papers, and they make even better reading than the London ones. Now, what is your impression of the country ? "

But Burberton did not answer him. He was conscious of being rather liked, but laughed at. At home he had been neither liked nor laughed at, and he had not cared. Now he cared and was angry, because his cynicism wouldn't work. It annoyed him that these men who were certainly no better

than himself should treat him as outside the pale of understanding. And why should they be sarcastic?

"What is your impression of America?" he retorted, when he had given his irritation time to fade slowly away.

"I've been there six times," said the judge. "I generally go home that way round. It's the only country in the world that could have produced you."

"You don't like Americans?"

"What is an American? I like you," said the other.

"I'd like very much to find out what holds you all here—you, for instance. You none of you like India."

"Like it? India's a beastly country to live in for any length of time—drains the life-blood out of you."

"Then what keeps you here?"

"You've been all up and down the country. Do you mean to say you haven't found that out yet? What are you going to do next?"

"Home, I think. No—I've a promise to keep first—a man named Ommony to visit—ever hear of him?"

"Not Ommony of the Woods and Forests by any chance? Visit him by all means—he'll give you the answer if anybody can."

"Who or what is he exactly?"

"Exactly? Why, he's Ommony of the Woods and Forests. Go and visit him and see."

"How do I get there?"

"Train—about five hundred miles—change at Ahmedabad for Tikpur—tonga sixty miles to the edge of the reservation—then ride, unless the tonga road is through the forest already—ride and find him."

III

HE knew how alone he was. He realized, as the squeaky tonga jolted him along the new-made road, that loneliness and nothing else had been the trouble with him. He was a specimen to other people—just as others had invariably been to him. Good, grown men looked at him, and dined and rode and talked with him, and did not care. He knew now that he wanted them to care.

And as he realized his loneliness the border of the forest swallowed him and road and tonga, and the silence settled down on him as though he had been dead long ages. The trees and the outskirts changed to greater trees; the sky became patchwork spots of blue between the branches, and the tonga-driver ceased his singing, tried to begin again, and stopped. Only the clip-clop of the ponies' feet and the shrilling of the oilless wheels disturbed the stillness, and the view was shut off by endless rows of giant tree trunks, that leaned back like a cordon of policemen to restrain the bursting verdure.

"I'll go—and stay one night—and come away again," said Burberton. "Two days of this would drive me mad!"

But he drove for some time through the forest, until he could have shrieked at the gloom and silence. At night he stayed in a log-cabin that a road-builder had left there. Once or twice in the night he heard the baying of a distant wolf-pack; and once—as he walked the stamped-earth floor—he paused and listened for a footfall. Something heavy, with soft feet, came and seemed to listen, and went away. After that the only sound was of the moths that fluttered round his lantern, and when morning came there was a track down the middle of the floor where he had paced it. He would not wait for breakfast; he wanted to gallop back into the sunshine, and would have done it, only the tonga ponies could not gallop, and it was a day's drive either way. So he drove on.

By midday of the second day the city life that he knew and hated seemed to have been paradise, and the only hell was here among the trees. Ommony must be the arch-administrator of hell, and Margaret Brunton, who was lost to him, the Queen of Heaven. He dreaded meeting Ommony—hated him before he heard him speak or saw him—hated himself for being such an idiot as to leave luxury and company for this—and fell asleep.

It was a devil that awoke him—a devil with muddied hair that reached down to his shoulders, with a tiger's claw suspended from his neck, and barely a rag of clothing—a red devil with a long knife tied to his waist, who glowed in the setting sun that shone huge and angry in a gap between the trees. The devil tugged at him, and Burberton descended from the tonga like a man who dreamed. For a second he entertained a wild idea of shooting, but his guns were cased and underneath the tonga seat.

" Are you Burberton ? " a deep, mellow voice called from among the trees. " Come along. I'm glad to meet you."

He followed the voice, and found a straight-backed man who leaned against a tree and looked like part of it ; his helmet and coat and puttees were all weather-stained, is if Mother Nature had made them too. He said nothing further, but shook hands and turned his back and led the way along a forest path. Burberton glanced back, with a careful thought for his guns and gear.

" Nobody steals anything hereabouts," said Ommony, who had not looked ; he had heard the turn—he was a forester.

" Wouldn't dare, I suppose ? "

" Wouldn't want to."

They strode along so fast that Burberton had difficulty in keeping up. Ommony went ahead through the tangled undergrowth with the gait and tirelessness of a shrimp-catcher in the surf, and the naked, mud-matted devil trotted behind, silent and tireless in his element. But presently the pace began to tell heavily on Burberton.

" How do you keep yourself from growing crazy here ? " he asked, hoping to gain time by conversation.

" By thinking of the forest. Thought I would go crazy when I first came. Thought of myself—think of the forest now—keep sane."

A minute later Ommony noticed his heavy breathing and slowed down. " I beg your pardon," he said, " that was stupid of me—I forgot."

They emerged soon into a clearing, where a wood and iron bungalow stood framed in a garden with a fence around it. There were native servants busied about the place, and on the small veranda a grizzled old man waited, who salaamed and smiled at sight of them. He looked like the Peace-God's elder brother.

" How often do you see a white man here ? "

" Hardly ever. Have a drink," suggested Ommony.

The old man had arranged the chairs for them on the veranda, and they sat down facing each other. Burberton studied his host at length, but Ommony seemed to have been satisfied with half a glance. If he looked at Burberton at all it was sideways—not slyly, but as a jungle denizen that watches even while it rests.

" Know Hamilton-Byng at all well ? " asked Burberton, bursting to speak, but at a loss for subjects.

" Yes. Had him here a month—five—six years ago. Cured him."

" Of what ? "

" Not listening."

Burberton stared hard between sips at a long cool drink. It dawned on him that Ommony was always listening.

" What do you find to listen to ? "

" The forest. Stay on and I'll show you."

A string of nude, lean savages emerged into the clearing, bearing Burberton's luggage on their heads. No one spoke to them, but they filed round behind the bungalow and stowed it all somewhere ; Burberton could hear a succession of thuds as the packages were lowered to the floor.

" You seem to have good servants," he volunteered.

" They and the forest taught me nearly all I know. They were bad at first, but I learned. Now there are none better anywhere."

They kept silence then until the sun went down with Indian suddenness and the black night glowed with moving phosphorescent dots. A little breeze sprang up suddenly, and the ghostly trees responded to it until the night was full of quietness rendered audible, and Burberton thought that the drums of his ears would burst.

" Dinner-time," said Ommony, so suddenly that Burberton was startled. " You'll find a bath already in your room."

He found more than a bath waiting. His dress-clothes were unpacked and laid out for him on the bed.

" Is Ommony sahib married, then ? " he asked the grizzled servant. The old man did not understand.

" Memsahib hai ? "

The old man shook his head.

So he dressed himself—stiff shirt, white silk waistcoat, patent-leather shoes—and laughed at his reflection in the glass. He suspected that the whole thing was a mistake on the old servant's part, and that Ommony —in khaki, with his sleeves rolled up—would laugh at him. The laughter, he thought, might serve to break the dreadful silence.

But he found Ommony waiting for him at a snow-white dinner-table in a suit that

lacked a dozen years of fashion but in a shirt that was immaculate.

"Do you always dress for dinner?"

"Of course," said Ommony. The question seemed superfluous.

It was a six-course dinner, beautifully served, and not hurried over. Ommony appeared to be astonishingly well-informed, and said nothing of his forest. Burberton had expected to be bored with interminable details about woodcraft and other matters of indifference. Gradually Ommony drew Burberton on to talking of America, and then he listened—keeping the monologue going by a deftly inserted question here and there. The dinner and the dress-suits seemed to have changed the very being of their wearers.

"Up at dawn," Ommony said at last, in a momentary pause. "Better go to bed."

"What time is it?"

"Midnight."

Norman Burberton stared harder now than ever. He—the blasé, money-weary cynic—had talked, and had been interested in his own talk for four long hours on end. And on the table between them stood a bottle of Madeira still half full. This was wizardry.

"I was thinking of leaving in the morning," he said. "I just looked in on you because I promised Byng."

"Byng wrote me. I answered him—I promised him I'd keep you."

"I——"

"Try one more day—then answer."

"But——"

"You're all right—just as he was. You don't drink, you don't boast, you're intelligent; stay on—you'll be glad afterwards."

"I'd go crazy."

"Try a day of it—two days—before you answer. I'll show you things you never dreamt of."

They had gone out to the veranda, and Ommony had moved himself away from the light that streamed through the open door; his voice came like a ghost's from the black darkness.

"Don't be afraid. All that"—Burberton could not see him, but he knew as well as he knew that it was dark, that Ommony was stretching out his hand towards the forest—"will heal you, it won't hurt you."

"I'm not afraid of anything," said Burberton.

"Then stay."

"I see what you mean. You don't see a white man very often—you're lonely—that's it?"

"Stay for that reason if you like."

So, with a little glow of virtue undermining his feeling of self-sacrifice, Burberton agreed to stay on for a day or two. He did it a little condescendingly and very grudgingly; and because of the darkness he failed to see the smile on Ommony's firm, weather-beaten face.

IV

BURBERTON never remembered afterwards all the details of the month that followed. They were like a dream, between the evening of his former life and the morning of his reawakening. Ommony—lone-handed in responsibility—ruled, watched, and listened to eight hundred square miles of forest; he was part of it, as were the animals he knew, and the naked forest-helpers who seemed to understand his thoughts; and he made his guest free of all of it.

He said little at any time, but he showed untiringly; and he taught Burberton the secret of the silences, that are never silent when one listens to them. And Burberton stayed, condescendingly at first—revolted (that was on the third day)—stayed on a little longer out of curiosity—stayed yet another week because the fancy seized him, and then—threw his heart into the thing and stayed.

Week after week they rode together under rioting waves of branches that filtered the fierce sun grudgingly through a wonder-mesh of green; or galloped boot to boot down twenty-mile-long glades, hand-hewn and goat-grazed to keep the fires in check. They watched the sambur feeding, nose up wind, and came on the wild pig rooting in the clearings. The whole jungle and its occupants were an open book to Ommony, and he showed it all until the feel of it crept under Burberton's skin.

Once, three weeks after Burberton's arrival, when they had breasted a rock-and-jungle rise by a roaring waterfall, Ommony said suddenly, "I'll show you Ali Beg," and they dismounted and crept cautiously between the boulders and lay side by side, peering through the jungle grass.

"What's Ali Beg?"

"Look!"

Careless in his strength, sun-bathed in a rock-strewn clearing, newly gorged, a tiger lay and licked himself, and Burberton, with held breath, watched him—strangely enough, without a white man's lust to kill. Then Ommony stood up head and shoulders above the grass and whistled; and fifty yards away the brute leaped to his feet and faced him, his tail swaying gently from side to side, and his huge fangs showing.

Ommony smiled back. He had no rifle in his hands.

"No goats, Ali Beg!" he warned in a level voice. "Remember—leave the goats alone."

At the sound of his voice the great sleek brute turned and strode away, swaggering, with his weight hung down between his shoulder-blades, and not once looking back.

"He's past his prime," said Ommony. "He's getting lazy. Next he'll get stiff. Then he'll find goats easier than sambur. Then——"

He looked down, and almost from between his feet a naked rifle-bearer rose. But it was always that way; men seemed to crop up from the jungle to obey his thoughts.

"Almost seemed as if the tiger understood you," said Burberton.

"He understands that I rule this jungle, and I understand him. That's enough. There are five like him in the forest, and they mayn't kill goats or men—that's all."

He sat down and signed to the boy to bring the tiffin basket; he almost never gave a spoken order, but he absolutely never went unwaited on.

"A hundred years ago there was no forest here—nothing but a wilderness and an occasional clump of trees. It's grown twenty-five per cent. in my time."

"Feels like your forest, I suppose?"

"No. Did at first. Now I belong to it—that's the secret. I didn't know anything until I let the forest take hold of me. It gave me all that's worth having—peace, strength, understanding—just as soon as I left off hating it and put out all I had. You've got to listen to it—listen all the time, then, after a while the forest tells you, and you can use your knowledge on the forest and be happy."

"I don't doubt anything you say—but what's the use? What's the end you're aiming for?"

"Ask God and the Government! The villagers think it's all to graze their goats in, and for fuel and building poles. Our friend, Ali Beg, imagines it's his hunting ground. These junglewallahs—who know it all and tell me all they know—think I own the forest. And I know I'm its servant. Did it ever strike you that in some ways you're like Ali Beg?"

"How d'you mean?"

But Ommony was not given to repeating things.

Night after night they dined in semi-regal state, dressed as sahibs, lest the forest take a too strong hold on them and cause them to forget their birthright. And from dawn to dark they rode or strode through growing jungle, inspecting fire-lanes, attending to the planting of the naked places, and seeing that the goats were kept within their grazing limits.

"You see, don't you?" said Ommony one afternoon, in one of his rare bursts of speech. "You can't stop the forest growing. You can swear at it, and hate it, but it grows. Care for it, love it, stamp the fires out, guard it, and it grows better. But you must listen—always listen!"

"Why should I listen? I'm not going to start a forest."

"I know you're not. You're going back into the outside world in three days' time. Don't go like Ali Beg. Listen and remember!"

"What's Ali Beg been doing?"

"Killed three goats a little after dawn—one for food, and two out of sheer wantonness."

Some strange conceit seemed to tickle Ommony, for he chuckled to himself. "You shall kill Ali Beg—you alone," he smiled; and after that he was silent until dinner-time. Before dinner, though, he gave certain orders to the hangers-on who clustered to the rearward of his bungalow.

He was silent all through dinner, even for Ommony, who had learned to love and listen to the silences, and as usual it was Burberton who broke the spell at last.

"I like you, Ommony," he said, and it was the first time in his life that he had ever said that to a man. "I'd like to see more of you, and you've made me keen on forestry. If you'll come to America I'll buy you a forest—a big one—and put you in charge of it, and pay you five times over what you're getting now."

"I'll tell you a little story," answered Ommony. "Listen. Once a trading company that happened to be English came to

India, and won the country by the sword. Notice the parallel; once a man became a millionaire by seizing opportunity. If you go deep down to the root of things you'll find it hard to justify either of them. Well, the company grew fat and lazy, and talked about 'inalienable rights.' The country groaned, and was impoverished; the company grumbled at the selfishness of native India. Then the country mutinied. You know the history. The company was spewed out and extinguished. It left the forests bare and the people starving. It had never listened. Then England came and and did listen; and look at India now."

"But you don't imagine, do you, that your Government is popular among the inhabitants. Why, they'd kick you all out to-morrow if they dared begin."

"If we left India to-morrow do you suppose there'd be a forest here in ten years' time, or an acre under irrigation? If some of *your* rich men—the men who work, I mean—the men who listen and then give out what they've learned—were put out of business, stripped, what d'you suppose would happen? India used to be a hunting ground—for money; then it became a burden, then a responsibility, and now, man alive, it's fun! It's like a mother with her child; we feel it—it drains our life-blood—it isn't grateful, but we get back what nothing else can give us."

"I don't quite see the parallel, as you choose to call it. I haven't been spewed out."

"No? I wish you could see yourself as you were a month ago! You were Ali Beg. Go back and give."

"You mean give money?"

"No, you idiot! Give yourself."

Long before dawn next morning fifty or more naked jungle-coolies scattered in a semi-circle through the forest, and as day broke, when the opalescent mist was lifting and the leaves were taking on a first faint glow of gold, Burberton stood alone in a clearing, breathing the sweet, cool morning air.

There came a crashing through the undergrowth. The fifty jungle-men were as silent as the tread of Nemesis; but the great striped brute they dodged and worried on from tree to tree was angry, and a tiger can be as silent as a snake or as noisy as a buffalo, just as the fancy happens to seize him. Ali Beg chose to give the jungle notice of his coming.

There came a pause—silence—and another crash. Then, head and shoulders protruding through the undergrowth, the tiger came to a stand and glared, twenty yards away. There was a sound behind him, the breaking of a twig, no more, but notice of the closing in. He glanced behind him; there were fifty behind him he could not see, and one in front he could; so he came with a rush and a spring—twelve feet in the air—a flashing, furious, yellow streak, that tore the wind, white-fanged, claw-tipped and snarling. And Burberton dropped him as he came, with a straight, clean shot, up and under, that tore through the breast and backbone. He fell two yards away.

"*Bass!*" said Ommony—the word that through the East means "Enough." "That ends it. It is finished."

"I'd no idea that you were near me."

"No? Did you think I'd leave you to the mercy of a driven tiger? That was a good shot. Your nerve's in fine condition; but it might not have been. I've had him covered all the way from where they flushed him. You should have fired when he first showed—I all but wiped your eye for you."

"I'm glad you didn't. Glad he fell to me."

"Don't let his ghost haunt you, that's all."

"I'd like to stay on and get another one."

"No. One Ali Beg's enough for any man. Go now. Get back to the place where you belong. I belong here, and you don't. Pack up your trunks and go."

"Won't you change your mind and come with me?"

"I? I'd no more leave my world until my time's up than you'll care to leave yours two years from now. Go back and remember what I told you—listen, and then give."

V

THE Secretary of State—grey-haired from forty years of worry—did tell a few friends of the visit paid to him by Burberton, but they were chosen friends, and the secret was well kept.

He offered millions upon millions. He said: "Here I am, and I'm ready. You need money—it's notorious, and I've got money; put me to work, and you can have the use of all of it." But the Secretary shook his head.

" What we need is men," he answered.

" But—millions—think what you, what we, could do with millions."

" We could get millions in a week. We can borrow them at three per cent. We could get a tenth of what you offer from almost any Maharajah, if we'd so much as add one gun to his salute. We need the men to use the money, and you can't buy them. If you want to give money there's a famine relief fund open—there are several universities in need of endowment —the trustees would be very grateful."

" Oh, I could do all that at home if I cared to. I want to work."

" Can't you work at home ? "

" But why not here, if you are in need of men ? "

The Secretary shook his head. " We need men whose hearts are in it permanently," he answered. " We have to train them, and they have to start at the very beginning. You'd never do. Try your own country."

But afterwards, when he told the story to his friends, his verdict was: " He'll go a long way, that boy will. He's got the idea." And the consensus of opinion was with him.

The other end of the story is better known—how Burberton went back to America, and what he has done there since. Margaret Brunton said that she had loved him all the time, and nobody ever doubted her. He met her at a dance, one week after his return to London, and no one was surprised when their engagement was reannounced fourteen days later. But she, and he, both kept the secret of exactly how it happened.

" What will be your next amusement ? " she asked him, after a conversation in between two dances.

" Next ? I'm going to make my country hum ! I'm going to make it sit up and notice ! The old dad's business will do all right to start with, but that's going to be child's play to what follows. I'm going to pick good men and turn 'em loose to do things, make things, create things, oh, you watch ! I'm going to live ! "

" And are you going to marry me first ? " she asked. " Or——"

That is the true, inside history of their engagement.

The Open Door

OPPORTUNITIES, like eggs, come one at a time. AMERICAN PROVERB.

THE wealth of both the Indies cannot redeem one single opportunity which you have once let slip. THOMAS À KEMPIS.

LIFE is but another name for action ; and he who is without opportunity exists, but does not live. G. S. HILLARD.

A MAN must wait for the right moment. SCHOPENHAUER.

A WISE man will make more opportunities than he finds. BACON.

THE man who loses his opportunity, loses himself. G. MOORE.

OPPORTUNITY makes us known to others, but more to ourselves. LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

THERE is never but one opportunity of a kind. THOREAU.

THE noble heart that understands and seizes quick hold of opportunity can achieve everything. GOETHE.

OPPORTUNITY has hair in front, but is bald behind ; if you meet her, seize her by the forelock, for Jove himself cannot catch her again if once let slip. RABELAIS.

The Dago

Of a dream that was not all a dream

By PERCEVAL GIBBON

EIGHT bells had sounded, and in the little triangular fo'c'sle of the *Anna Maria* the men of the port watch were waiting for their dinner. The daylight which entered by the open hatch overhead spread a carpet of light at the foot of the ladder, which slid upon the deck to the heave and fall of the old barque's blunt bows, and left in shadow the double row of bunks and the chests on which the men sat. From his seat nearest the ladder, Bill, the ship's inevitable Cockney, raised his flat voice in complaint.

"That bloomin' Dago takes 'is time over fetchin' the hash," he said. "'E wants wakin' up a bit—that's wot 'e wants."

Sprawling on the edge of his bunk forward, Dan, the oldest man in the ship, took his pipe from his lips in the deliberate way in which he did everything. Short in stature and huge in frame, the mass of him, even in that half-darkness of the fo'c'sle, showed somehow majestic and powerful.

"The mate came after 'im about somethin' or other," he said in his deep, low tones.

"That's right," said another seaman. "It was about spillin' some tar on the deck, an' now the Dago's got to stop up this arternoon an' holystone it clean in his watch below."

"Bloomin' fool," growled the Cockney. But it was the wrong word, and the others were silent. A man in trouble with an officer, though he be no seaman and a Dago, may always count on the sympathy of the fo'c'sle.

"'E ain't fit to paddle a bumboat," the Cockney went on. "Can't go aloft, can't stand 'is wheel, can't even fetch the hash to time——"

"Yes!" Dan shifted slowly, and the younger man stopped short. "You better slip along to the galley, Bill, an' see about that grub."

The Cockney swore, but rose from his seat. Dan was not to be disobeyed in the fo'c'sle. But at that moment the hatch above was darkened.

"'Ere's the Dago," cried Bill. "Where you bin, you bloomin' fool?"

A bare foot came over the combing, feeling vaguely for the steps of the ladder. Dan sat up and laid by his pipe; two seamen went to assist in the safe delivery of their dinner.

"Carn't yer never learn to bring the grub down the ladder backwards?" Bill was demanding of the new-comer. "Want to capsize it all again, like yer done before?"

"Ah, no!"

The Dago stood in the light of the hatch and answered the Cockney with a shrug and a timid, conciliatory smile. He was a little swarthy man, lean and anxious, with quick, apprehensive eyes which flitted now nervously from one to the other of the big sailors whose comrade and servant he was. There was upon him none of that character of the sea which shaped their every gesture and attitude. As the Cockney snarled at him he moved his hands in deprecating gesticulation; a touch of the florid appeared in him, of that easy vivacity which is native to races ripened in the sun.

"Keepin' men waitin' like this," mouthed Bill. "Bloomin, flat-footed, greasy-'anded old——"

Dan's deliberate voice struck in strongly. "Ain't you goin' to have no dinner, Dago?" he demanded. "Come on an' sit down to it, man!"

The Dago made one final shrug at Bill.

"De mate," he said, smiling with raised eyebrows, as though in pitying reference to that officer's infirmities of temper, "'e call me. So I cannot go to de galley for to fetch de dinner more quick. Please escuse."

Bill snarled. "Come *on* with ye," called Dan again.

"Ah, yais!" And now his smile and his start to obey apologised to Dan for not having come at the first summons.

Dan pushed the " kid " of food towards him. " Dig in," he bade him. " You've had better grub than this in yer time, but it's all there is. So go at it."

" Better dan dis ! " The Dago paused to answer in the act of helping himself. " Ah, mooch, mooch better, yais. I tell you." He began to gesticulate as he talked, trying to make these callous, careless men see with him the images that his words called up.

" Joost before de hot of de day I sit-a down in a balcao, where it is shade, yais, an' look at-a de water an' de trees, an' hear de bells, all slow an' gentle, in de church. An' when it is time dey bring me de leetle fish like-a de gold, all fresh, an' de leetle bread-cakes, yais, an' de wine."

" That's the style," approved a seaman. Though they did not cease to eat, they were all listening. Tales of food and drink are always sure of a hearing in the fo'c'sle.

" On a table of de black wood, shining, an' a leetle cloth like snow," the Dago went on ; " an' de black woman dat brings it smiles wiz big white teeth."

He paused, seeing it all—the tropic languor and sweetness of the life he had conjured up, so remote, so utterly different from the rough-hewn realities that surrounded him.

" Shove that beef-kid down this way, will yer ? " called Bill.

" You wait," answered Dan. He jogged the Dago with his elbow. " Now, lad," he said, " that's talk enough. Get yer grub."

¶

THE Dago, recalled from his visions, smiled and sighed and leaned forward to take his food. From his seat by the ladder, Bill the Cockney watched with mean, angry eyes to measure the size of his helping.

It was at Sourabaya, in Java, that he had been shipped to fill, as far as he could, the place of a man lost overboard. The port had been bare of seamen ; the choice was between the Dago and nobody ; and so one evening he had come alongside in a sampan and joined the crew of the *Anna Maria*. He brought with him as his kit a bundle of broken clothes and a flat paper parcel containing a single suit of clean white duck, which he cherished under the straw mattress of his bunk and never wore. He made no pretence of being a seaman. He could neither steer nor go aloft, and there fell to him, naturally, all the work of the ship that was ignominious or unpleasant or merely menial. It was the Dago, with his shrug and his feeble, complaisant smile, who scraped the boards of the pigsty and hoisted coal for the cook, and swept out the fo'c'sle while the other men lay and smoked.

" What made ye ship, anyway ? " men would ask him angrily, when some instance of his incompetence had added to the work of the others. To this, if they would hear him, he had always an answer. He was a Portuguese, it seemed, of some little town on the coast of East Africa, where a land-locked bay drowsed below the windows of the houses under the day-long sun. When he spoke of it, if no one cut him short, his voice would sink to a hushed tone and he would seem to be describing a scene he saw. His jerking, graphic hands would fall still as he talked of the little streets where no one made a noise, and the sailors stared curiously at his face with the glamour of dreams on it.

From a life tuned to that murmur of basking waters a mishap had dragged him forth. It took the shape of a cruise in a fishing boat, in which he and three companions—" t'ree senhores, t'ree gentilmen " —had run into weather and been blown out to sea, there to be rescued, after four days of hunger and terror, by a steamship which had carried them to Aden and put them ashore there penniless. It was here that his tale grew vague. For something like three years he had wandered, working on ships and ashore, always hoping that sooner or later a chance would serve him to return to his home. Twice already he had got to Mozambique, but that was still nearly a thousand miles from his goal, and on each occasion his ship had carried him inexorably back. The *Anna Maria* was bound for Mozambique, and he had offered himself, with new hopes for his third attempt.

" D'ye reckon you'll do it this passage ? " the seamen used to ask him over their pipes.

He would shrug and spread his hands. " Ah, who can tell ? But some time, yais."

" An' what did ye say the name o' that place o' yours was ? "

He would tell them, speaking its syllables with soft pleasure in their mere sound.

" Never heard of it," they always said. " Ships don't go there, Dago."

" Ah, but yais." The Dago had known ships call. " Not often, but sometimes.

There is leetle trade, an' ships come. On de tide, floating up to anchor, so close you hear de men talkin' on de fo'c'sle head, and dey hear de people ashore—girl singin', perhaps—and smell de trees."

"Do they, though?"

"Yais. Dat night I go out to fish in de boat—ah, dat night!—a girl was singin', and her voice it float on de bay all round me. An' I stand in de boat an' take off my hat"—he rose to show them the gesture—"and sing back to her, an' she is quiet to listen in de darkness."

¶

WHEN dinner was over it fell to the Dago to take the "kids" back to the galley and sweep down the deck. So he had barely time to smoke the cigarette he made of shredded ship's tobacco rolled in a strip of newspaper before he had to go on deck again to holystone the spilled tar from the planks. Dan gave him advice about using a hard stone and plenty of sand, to which he listened, smiling, and then he went up the ladder again, with his rags shivering upon him, to the toil of the afternoon.

The seamen were already in their bunks, each smoking ruminatively the pipe that prefaces slumber.

"Queer yarn that feller tells," remarked one of them idly. "How much of it d'you reckon's true, Dan?"

In the for'ard lower bunk Dan opened drowsy eyes. He was lying on his back with his hands under his head, and the sleeves of his shirt rolled back left bare his mighty forearms with their faded tattooings. His big, beardless face was red, like rusty iron, with over thirty years of seafaring; it was simple and strong, a transparent mask of the man's upright and steadfast spirit.

"Eh?" he said, and the other repeated his question. Dan sucked at his pipe and breathed the smoke forth in a thin blue mist.

"It might be true enough," he answered at length, in his deliberate bass. "Things like that does happen; you c'n read 'em in newspapers. Anyhow, true or not, the Dago believes it all."

"Meanin' he's mad?" inquired the other. "Blowed if I didn't think it once or twice myself."

"He's mad right enough," agreed another seaman comfortably, while from Bill's bunk came the usual snarl of "bloomin' fool."

Dan turned over on his side and put his pipe away.

"He don't do any harm, anyhow," he said, pulling up his blanket. "There's worse than him."

"Plenty, poor devil," agreed the first speaker, as he too prepared for the afternoon's sleep.

On his knees upon the deck aft, shoving his holystone to and fro laboriously and unhandily along the planks where the accident with the tar-pot had left its stain, the Dago still broke into little meaningless smiles. For him, at any rate, the narrow scope between the stem and stern of the *Anna Maria* was not the world. He had but to lift up the eyes of his mind to behold, beyond it and dwarfing it to triviality, the glamours of a life in which it had no part. Those who saw him at his dreary penance had their excuse for thinking him mad, for there were moments when his face glowed like a lover's, his lips moved in soundless speech, and he had the aspect of a man illuminated by some sudden and tender joy.

"Now, then, you Dago there," the officer of the watch shouted at him. "Keep that stone movin', an' none of yer shenanikin'!"

"Yais, sir," answered the Dago, and bowed himself obediently.

It needed the ingenuity of Bill to trouble his tranquillity of mind. The old *Anna Maria* was far on her passage, and already there were birds about her, the far-flying scouts of the land, and the colour of the water had changed to a softer and more radiant blue. It was as though sad Africa made herself comely to invite them to her shores. Bill had a piece of gear to serve with spunyarn, and was at work abreast of the foremast, with the Dago to help him. The rope on which they worked was stretched between the rail and the mast. Bill had the serving-mallet, and as he worked it round the rope the Dago passed the ball of spunyarn in time with him. The mate was aft, superintending some work upon the mizzen, and Bill took his job easily. The Dago, with his little smile to which his lips shaped themselves unconsciously, passed the ball in silence. The Cockney eyed him unpleasantly.

"Say, Dago," he said presently, "wot was the name o' that there place you said you come from?"

"Eh?" The Dago roused from his smiling reverie. "De name? Ah, yais." He pronounced the name slowly, making its syllables render their music.

"Yus," said Bill, "I thought that was it."

He went on working, steadily, nonchalantly. The Dago stared at him, perplexed.

"Why you want to know dat name?" he asked at length.

"Well," said Bill, "you bin talkin' abaht it a lot, and so, d'yer see, I reckoned I'd find out. An' yesterday I 'ad to go into the cabin to get at the lazareet 'atch, an' the chart was spread out on the table."

"De chart?" The Dago was slow to understand. "Ah, yais. Mapa—chart. An' you look at-a 'im, yais?"

"Yus," answered Bill, who, like most men before the mast, had never seen a chart in his life. "I looked at ev'ry name on it, ev'ry bloomin' one. A chart o' Africa it was, givin' the whole lot of 'em. But your place——"

"Yais?" cried the Dago. "You see 'im? An' de leetle bay under de hills? You find it?"

"No," said Bill, "I didn't find it. It wasn't there."

"Wasn't there?" The Dago's smile was gone now; his forehead was puckered like a child's in bewilderment, and a darker doubt at the back of his thoughts loomed up in his troubled eyes.

"No," said the Cockney, watching him zestfully. "You got it wrong, Dago, an' there ain't no such place. You dreamt it. Savvy? All wot you bin tellin' us about the town an' the bay an' the way you used to take it easy there—all that's just a bloomin' lie. See?"

The Dago's face was white and his lips trembled. He tried to smile.

"Not there," he repeated. "It is de joke, not? You fool me, Bill, yais?"

Bill shook his head. "I wouldn't fool yer abaht a thing like that," he declared sturdily. "There ain't no such place, Dago. It's just one o' yer fancies, yer know."

¶

IN those three years of wandering there had been dark hours turbulent with pain, hours when his vision, his hope, his memory had not availed to uplift him, and he had known the terror of a doubt lest the whole of it should, after all, be but a creation of his yearnings, a mirage of his desires. Everywhere men had believed him mad. He had accepted that as he accepted toil, hunger and exile, as things to be redeemed by their end. But if it should be true! If this grossness and harshness should, after all, be his real life! Bill saw the agony that broke loose within his victim, and bent his head above his work to hide a smile.

"Ah!" The quiet exclamation was all that issued from the Dago's lips; the surge of emotion within him sought no vent in words. But Bill was satisfied; he had the instincts of a connoisseur in torment, and the Dago's face was now a mask that looked as if it had never smiled.

It was Dan that spoiled and undid the afternoon's work. During the second dog-watch, when the Dago kept the look-out, he carried his pipe to the forecastle head and joined him there. Right ahead of the ship the evening sky was still stained with the afterglow of the sunset; the jibboom swung gently athwart a heaven in whose darkening arch there was still a ghost of colour. Between the anchors, where they lay lashed on their chocks, the Dago stood and gazed west to where, beyond the horizon, the shores of Africa had turned barren and meaningless.

"Well, lad," rumbled Dan, "gettin' near it, eh? Gettin' on towards the little town by the bay, ain't we?"

The Dago swung round towards him.

"Dere is no town," he said calmly. "No town, no bay, no anyt'ing. I was mad, but now I know."

He spoke evenly enough, and in the lessening light his face was indistinct. But old Dan, for all his thirty and odd years of hard living, had an ear tuned delicately to the trouble of his voice.

"What's all this?" he demanded shortly. "Who's been tellin' you there ain't no town or anything? Out with it! Who was it?"

"It don't matter," said the Dago. "It was Bill." And briefly, in the same even tones, like those of a man who talks in his sleep, he told the tale of Bill's afternoon's sport.

"Ah, so it was Bill!" said Dan slowly, when the recital was at an end. "Bill, was it? Ye-es. Well, o' course you know that Bill's the biggest liar ever shipped out o' London, where liars is as common as weevils in bread. So you don't want to take no notice of anything Bill says."

The Dago shook his head. "It is not that," he said. "It is not de first time I 'ave been called mad; and sometimes I have think it myself."

"Oh, go on with ye," urged Dan. "You ain't mad."

"T'ree years," went on the Dago in his mournful, subdued voice. "T'ree years I go abot an' work, always poor, dirty work, an' got no name, only 'Dago.' I t'ink all de time 'bout my leetle beautiful town; but sometimes I t'ink, too, when I am tired an' people is hard to me: 'It is a dream. De world has no place so good as dat.' What you t'ink, Dan?"

"Oh, I dunno," grunted Dan awkwardly. "Anyhow, there ain't no harm in it. It don't follow a man's mad because he's got fancies."

"Fancies!" repeated the Dago.

"Fancies!" He seemed to laugh a little to himself, laughter with no mirth in it.

Night was sinking on the great solitude of waters. Above them the sails of the foremast stood pale and lofty, and there was the rhythmic jar of a block against a backstay. The *Anna Maria* lifted her weather bow easily to the even sea, and the two men on the fo'c'sle head swung on their feet unconsciously to the movement of the barque.

"Eef it was only a fancy," said the Dago suddenly, "eef it was only a town in my mind, I don' want it no more." He made a motion with his hand as though he cast something from him. "I t'ink all dis time it is true, dat some day I find it again. It help me; it keep me glad; it save me from misery. But now it is all finish."

"But don't you *know*," cried Dan, "don't you know for sure whether it's true or not?"

The Dago shook his head. "I am no more sure," he said. "For t'ree years I have had bad times, hard times. So—now I am not sure. Dat is why I t'ink I am a little mad, like Bill said."

"Never mind Bill," said Dan. "I'll settle with Bill."

He put his heavy hand on the other's arm.

"Lad," he said, "I'm sorry for your trouble. I ain't settin' up to know much about fellers' minds, but it seems to me as if you was better off without them fancies, if they ain't true. An' that town o' yours! It sounded fine, as good a place as ever I heard of; but it was mighty like them ports worn-out sailormen is always figurin' to themselves, where they'll go ashore and take it easy for the rest o' their lives. It was too good, mate, too good to be true."

There was a pause. "Yes," said the Dago at last. "It was too good, Dan."

Dan gave his arm a grip, and left him to his look out over a sea whose shores were now as desolate as itself, a man henceforth to be counted sane, since he knew life as bare of beauty, sordid and difficult.

Dan put his pipe in his pocket and walked aft to the main hatch, where the men were gathered for the leisure of the dog-watch. He went at his usual deliberate gait, a notable figure of seamanlike respectability and efficiency. Upon his big, shaven face a rather stolid tranquillity reigned. Bill, leaning against a corner of the galley, looked up at him carelessly.

"'Ullo, Dan," he greeted him.

"Hullo, Bill," responded Dan. "I bin talkin' to the Dago."

"Oh, 'ave yer?" said Bill.

"Yes," said Dan, in the same conversational tone. "I have. An' now I'm going to have a word with you. Stand clear of that deckhouse!"

"Eh?" cried Bill. "Say, Dan——"

That was all. Dan's fist, the right one, of the hue and hardness of teak, with Dan's arm behind it, arrived just under his eye, and the rest of the conversation was yelps. No one attempted to interrupt; even the captain and mate, who watched from the poop, made no motion to interfere; Dan's reputation for uprightness stood him in good stead.

"There, now," he said, when it was over, and he allowed the gasping, bleeding Cockney to fall back on the hatch. "See what comes of not takin' hints?"

¶

THEY made Mozambique upon the morning of a day when the sun poured from the heavens and the light wind came warm off the land. The old *Anna Maria*, furling sail by sail, floated up to her anchorage and let go her anchors just as a shore-boat, manned by big nearly naked negroes, with a white man sitting in the stern, raced up alongside. In less than an hour the hands were lifting the anchors again and getting ready to go to sea once more. The cook, who had served the captain and his visitor with breakfast, was able to explain the mystery. He stood at his galley door, with his cloth cap cocked sportively over one eye, and gave the facts to the inquisitive sailors.

" That feller in the boat was th' agent," he said. " A Porchugee, he was. Wanted wine f'r 'is breakfus'. An' the orders is, we're to go down the coast to a place called —le'me see, now. What was it called? Some Dago name that I can't call to mind."

Dan was among his hearers, and by some freak of memory the name of the town of which the Dago had been used to speak, the town which was now a dream to be forgotten, came to his lips. He spoke it aloud.

" It wasn't that, I s'pose ? " he suggested.

" You've got it," cried the cook. " That was it, Dan; the very place. Fancy you knowin' it. Well, we got to go down there and get in across a sort of bar what's there an' discharge into lighters. Seems it's a bit out o' the way o' shippin'. The skipper said the charterers seemed to think the old boat ran on wheels."

" Queer ! " said Dan. To himself he said: " He must ha' heard the name somewhere and hitched his dream to it."

The name, as it chanced, was one of many syllables, and the sailors managed them badly. Men who speak of the islands of Diego Ramirez as the " Daggarammarines " are not likely to deal faithfully with a name that rings delicately like guitar strings, and Dan observed that their mention of the barque's destination had no effect upon the Dago. For him all ports had become indifferent; one was not nearer than another to any place of his desire. He spoke no more of his town; when the men, trying to draw him, spoke about food, or women, or other roads to luxury, he answered without smiling.

" I t'ink no more 'bout dat," he said. " T'ree year I work an' have bad times. Before, I don' remember no more."

" He was better when he was crazy," agreed the seamen. It was as though the gaiety, the spring of gladness, within the little man had been dried up; there was left only the incompetent and despised Dago. He faced the routine of his toil now with no smile of preoccupation for a sweeter vision; he shuffled about decks, futile as ever, with the dreariness of a man in prison.

Only to Dan he spoke more freely. It was while the watch was washing down decks in the morning. The two were side by side, plying their brooms along the wet planks, while about them the dawn broadened towards the tropic day.

" I am no more mad," said the Dago. " Now I know I am not mad. Dat name of de place where we go—de men don' know how to speak it, but it is de name of my town, de town I t'ink about once so much. Yais—I know ! At last, after all dis time, I come dere, but I am not glad. I am never glad no more 'bout not'ing."

Dan worked on. He could think of no answer to make.

" Only 'bout one t'ing I am glad," went on the Dago. " 'Bout a friend I make on dis ship; 'bout you, Dan."

" Oh, hell ! " grunted Dan awkwardly.

" But 'bout de town, I am no more glad. I know now it is more better to be sad an' poor an' weak dan to be mad an' glad about fancies. Yais—I know now ! "

" You'll be all right," said Dan. " Cheer up, lad. There's fellers worse off than you ! " An inspiration lit up his honest and downright brain for a moment. " Why," he said, " it's better to be you than be a feller like Bill that never had a fancy in his life. You've lost a lot, maybe; but you can't lose a thing you never had."

The Dago half-smiled. " Yais," he said. " You are mos' wise, Dan. But, Dan ! Dan ! "

" Yes. What ? "

" If it had been true, Dan—dat beautiful town an' all my dream ! If it had been true ! "

" Shove along wi' that broom," advised Dan. " The mate's lookin'."

¶

THEY came abreast of their port about midday, and Dan, at the wheel, heard the captain swear as they stood in through a maze of broken water, where coral reefs sprouted like weeds in a neglected garden, towards the hills that stood low above the horizon. He had been furnished, it seemed, with a chart concerning whose trustworthiness he entertained the bitterest doubts. There was some discussion with the mate about anchoring and sending in a boat to bring off a pilot, but presently they picked up a line of poles sticking up above the water like a ruined fence, and these seemed to comfort the captain. Bits of trees swam alongside; a flight of small birds, with flashes of green and red in their plumage, swung about them; the water, as they went, changed colour. Little by little the hills lifted from the level of the water and took

on colour and variety, till from the deck one could make out the swell of their contours and distinguish the hues of the wild vegetation that clothed them. The yellow of a beach and a snowy gleam of surf showed at their feet, and then, dead ahead and still far away, they opened, and in the gap there was visible the still, shining blue of water that ran inland and lay quiet under their shelter.

"Stand by your to'gallant halliards!" came the order. "Lower away there!"

It was evening already when the old *Anna Maria*, floating slowly under a couple of jibs and a foretopsail, rounded the point and opened the town. The bay, with its fringe of palms, lay clear before her; beyond its farthest edge, the sun had just set, leaving his glories to burn out behind him, and astern of them in the east the swift tropic night was racing up the sky. The little town—a church-tower and a cluster of painted, flat-roofed houses, lay behind the point at the water's edge. There was a music of bells in the still air. With the night at her heels, the *Anna Maria* moved almost imperceptibly towards the town.

"Stand by to anchor!" came the order from aft, and the mate, calling three men, went up the ladder to the fo'c'sle head.

Dan was one of the three. He was at the rail, looking at the little town as it unfolded itself, house after house, with the narrow streets between, when he first noticed the white figure at his side. He turned in surprise; it was the Dago, in the cherished suit of duck which he had guarded for so long under his mattress.

"What's all this?" demanded Dan.

The Dago was looking with all his eyes at the town, already growing dim.

"Dis?" he repeated. "Dese clo'se, I keep dem for my town, Dan. To come back wis—yais! For not be like a mendigo—a beggar. Now, no need to keep dem no more; and dis place—oh, Dan, it is so like, so like! I dream it all—yais—de church, de praça—all of it!"

"Steady!" growled Dan. "Don't get dreamin' it again."

"No," said the Dago; "I never dream no more. Never no more!"

He did not take his eyes from it; he stood at the rail gazing, intent, absorbed. He did not hear the mate's brief order that summoned him and the others across the deck.

"When I go out on de fishin' boat," he said aloud, thinking Dan was still at his side, "a girl was singin' an'——"

"Here, you!" cried the mate. "What's the matter with you? Why don't you——"

He stopped in amazement, for the Dago turned and spat a brief word at him, making a gesture with his hand as though to command silence.

In the moment that followed they all heard it—a voice that sang, a strong and sweet contralto that strewed its tones forth like a scent, to add itself to the other scents of earth and leaves that travelled across the waters and reached them on their deck.

"What the——" began the mate, and moved to cross the deck.

His surprises were not yet at an end, for Dan caught him by the arm with a grip in which there was no deference for the authority of a chief officer.

"Leave him be, sir," urged Dan. "I—I know what's the matter with him. Leave him be!"

The voice ashore soared again, sure and buoyant; the mate dragged his arm free from Dan's hold and turned to swear; on the main deck the hoarse laugh of Bill answered the singer. The Dago heard nothing. Bending forward over the rail, he stretched both arms forth, and in a voice that none recognized, broken and passionate, he took up the song. It was but for a minute, while the mate recovered his outraged senses, but it was enough. The voice ashore had ceased.

"What the blank blank!" roared the mate," as he dragged the Dago across the deck. "What d'ye mean by it, eh? Get hold o' that rope, or I'll——"

"Yais, sir,"

A moment later he turned to Dan, and in the already deepening gloom his smile gleamed white in his face.

"Ah, my frien'!" he said. "Dere was no dream. T'ree years, all bad, all hard, all sad—dat was de dream. *Now* I wake up. Only one t'ing true in all de t'ree years—de friend I make—yais."

"Hark!" said Dan. "Hear it? There's boats comin' off to us."

"Yais!" The smile gleamed again. "For me. It is no dream. Dey hear my voice when I sing. By'm by you hear dem callin', 'Felipe!' Dat's my name."

"Listen, then," said Dan in a whisper.

The water trickled alongside. Across the bay there came the clack of oars in rowlocks, pulled briskly, and voices.

"Felipe!" they called. "Felipe!"

The Dago's hand found Dan's.

The Enchanted Hour

An Old-Time Courtship

HE then, on one knee, taking my passive hand between both his, and kissing it, once, twice, thrice—"Repeat, dear, and ever-dear, Miss Byron, that this is *all* your doubt." (I bowed assentingly: I could not speak.)—"A happy, an easy task is mine! Be assured, dearest Madam, that I will disavow every action of my life, every thought of my heart, every word of my mouth, which tends not to dissipate that doubt!"

I took out my handkerchief.

"My dear Miss Byron," proceeded he, with an ardour that bespoke his heart, "you are goodness itself. I approached you with diffidence, with more than diffidence, with apprehension, because of your known delicacy; which I was afraid, on this occasion, would *descend* into punctiliousness.—May blessings attend my future life, as my grateful heart shall acknowledge this goodness!"

Again he kissed my hand, rising with dignity. I could have received his vows on my knees; but I was motionless; yet, how was I delighted to be the cause of joy to him!—Joy to your brother!—to Sir Charles Grandison!

He saw me greatly affected, and indeed my emotion increased on reflection. He considerately said, "I will leave you, my dear Miss Byron, to intitle myself to the congratulations of all our friends below. From this moment, after a thousand suspenses, and strange events, which, unsought for, have checkered my past life, I date my happiness."

He most respectfully left me.

I was glad he did: yet my eyes followed him. His very shadow was grateful to me, as he went downstairs.

Samuel Richardson.

'TIS said—but whether true or not
Let bards declare who've seen 'em—
That Love and Time have only got
One pair of wings between 'em.
In courtship's first delicious hour,
The boy full oft can spare 'em;
So, loit'ring in his lady's bower,
He lets the grey-beard wear 'em.
Then is Time's hour of play;
Oh, how he flies, flies away!

Thomas Moore.

The True Morning of Life

AS the sun rises in the morning, chasing away the darkness of night, and tinting all the little clouds with a roseate hue, beautiful in its promise, noble in its strength, fit herald of a bright and pure day—even so should the true morning of life rise in each heart, and gild the coming day. Love, desire, faith, esteem, and all the wondrous anticipations of hope, should be on our side: so that, if even after the sweet pastime of courtship the day should be stormy and gusts of misfortune arise, a sweet remembrance of the morning will cheer us all through.

James Hain Friswell.

The Pleasantest Part

THE pleasantest part of a man's life is generally that which he passes in courtship, provided his passion be sincere, and the party beloved kind with discretion. Love, desire, hope, all the pleasing motions of the soul rise in the pursuit. . . . Those marriages generally abound most with love and constancy that are preceded by a long courtship. The passion should strike root, and gather strength, before marriage be grafted on it. A long course of hopes and expectations fixes the idea on our minds, and habituates us to a fondness of the person beloved.

JOSEPH ADDISON.

HER garden gate stands open; all my years
Have been a preparation for this minute.
My hand is on the latch; soon will my fears
Be ended and my heart speak all that's in it.
The stars lean over the heavenly balconies
Eager and hushed. Bright ones, though fair you are,
My love is fairer than you and purer, and she's
As quiet in her motion—and as far.
Far? You bend near to-night, then why not she?
There moves the enamoured moon! Ah! Loveliness,
Why do you circle earth eternally,
Held by what tale whose charm grows never less
What word was't Paris breathed in Helen's ear? . . .
Undo the door, my fair, Paris is here.

THOMAS SHARP.

Divine Gifts

HERE sit a couple to whom Love's simple bread and water is a finer feast.

Pipe, happy sheep-boy, Love! Irradiated angels, unfold your wings and lift your voices!

They have outflown philosophy. Their instinct has shot beyond the ken of science. They were made for their Eden.

"And this divine gift was in store for me!"

So runs the internal outcry of each, clasping each: it is their recurring refrain to the harmonies. How it illumined the years gone by and suffused the living Future!

"You for me: I for you!"

"We are born for each other!"

They believe that the angels have been busy about them from their cradles. The celestial hosts have worthily striven to bring them together. And, O victory! O wonder! after toil and pain, and difficulties exceeding, the celestial hosts have succeeded!

"Here we two sit who are written above as one!"

Pipe, happy Love! pipe on to these dear innocents!

GEORGE MEREDITH.

"THEIR courtship was carried on in poetry." Alas! many an enamoured pair have courted in poetry, and after marriage lived in prose.

JOHN FOSTER.

Somewhat Unconventional

MR. BACON rose in great emotion, and taking his friend's hand pressed it fervently and tremulously. Presently they heard the wicket open, and Deborah came in.

"I dare say, Deborah," said her father, composing himself, "you have been telling Betsy Allison of the advantageous offer that you have this day refused."

"Yes," replied Deborah; "and what do you think she said? That little as she likes him, rather than that I should be thrown away upon such a man, she could almost make up her mind to marry him herself."

"And I," said the Doctor, "rather than such a man should have you would marry you myself."

"Was not I right in refusing him, Doctor?"

"So right, that you never pleased me so well before; and never can please me better, —unless you will accept of me in his stead."

She gave a little start, and looked at him half incredulously, and half angrily withal; as if what he had said was too light in its manner to be serious, and yet too serious in its import to be spoken in jest. But when he took her by the hand, and said, "Will you, dear Deborah?" with a pressure, and in a tone that left no doubt of his earnest meaning, she cried, "Father, what am I to say? Speak for me!"—"Take her, my friend!" said Mr. Bacon. "My blessing be upon you both." Robert Southey.

ZEKLE crep' up, quite unbeknown,
An' peeked in thru the winder,
An' there sot Huldy all alone,
'ith no one nigh to hinder. . . .

"You want to see my Pa, I spose?"
"Wal, no; I come designin'—"
"To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es
Agin to-morrow's i'nin'."

He stood a spell on one foot fust
Then stood a spell on t'other.
An' on which one he felt the wus'
He couldn't ha' told ye, nuther.

Sez he, "I'd better call agin;
Sez she, "Think likely, *Mister*;"
The last word pricked him like a pin.
An' wal, he up and kist her.

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
Huldy sot pale ez ashes
All kind o' smily round the lips
An' teary round the lashes.

James Russell Lowell.

As it Strikes an Onlooker

THE passion of love generally appears to everybody but the man who feels it entirely disproportionate to the value of the object; and though love is pardoned in a certain age, because we know it is natural, having violently seized the imagination, yet it is always laughed at, because we cannot enter into it: and all serious and strong expressions of it appear ridiculous to a third person; and though a lover is good company to his mistress, he is so to nobody else.

Adam Smith.

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TRILBY

By GEORGE DU MAURIER

Into the care-free, Bohemian lives of three inseparable art students, "Taffy," late of the household cavalry, "the Laird," of Scottish descent, and "Little Billee," a serious-minded young Englishman, there has entered a disturbing influence. One afternoon, their studio in the Latin Quarter was invaded by Trilby O'Ferrall, a beautiful artist's model, who lives—as Bohemians live.

Trilby sings to the accompaniment of Svengali, a German musician of genius but sinister personality, who admires her voice, although to the other listeners her singing seems a very artless performance. Svengali afterwards cures Trilby of neuralgic pains in her eyes by mesmerism. In this way he gradually exercises a profound influence over her mind.

Each of the three students is in love with Trilby, but Little Billee most of all. His sensitive, idealistic nature is deeply shocked by the discovery that Trilby sits in the nude at Carrel's art school.

Trilby loves Little Billee but she feels that her past life is an insuperable obstacle to their closer friendship.

LITTLE BILLEE spent a month at Barbizon and when he came back it was with such a brown face that his friends hardly knew him; and he brought with him such studies as made his friends "sit up."

The crushing sense of their own hopeless inferiority was lost in wonder at his work, in love and enthusiasm for the workman.

Their Little Billee, so young and tender, so weak of body, so strong of purpose, so warm of heart, so light of hand, so keen and quick and piercing of brain and eye, was their master, to be stuck on a pedestal and looked up to and bowed down to, to be watched and warded and worshipped for evermore.

When Trilby came in from her work at six, and he shook hands with her and said "Hullo, Trilby!" her face turned pale to the lips, her under lip quivered, and she gazed down at him (for she was among the tallest of her sex) with such a moist, hungry, wide-eyed look of humble craving adoration that the Laird felt his worst fears were realised; and the look Little Billee sent up in return filled the manly bosom of Taffy with an equal apprehension.

Then they all four went and dined together at le père Trin's, and Trilby went back to her *blanchisserie de fin*.

Next day Little Billee took his work to show Carrel, and Carrel invited him to come and finish his picture, "The Pitcher Goes to the Well," at his own private studio—an unheard-of favour which the boy accepted with a thrill of proud gratitude and affectionate reverence.

So little was seen for some time of Little Billee at the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, and little of Trilby; a *blanchisseuse de fin* has not many minutes to spare from her irons. But they often met at dinner. And on Sunday mornings Trilby came to repair the Laird's linen and darn his socks and look after his little comforts, as usual, and spend a happy day. And on Sunday afternoons the studio would be as lively as ever, with the fencing and boxing, the piano-playing and fiddling—all as it used to be.

And week by week the friends noticed a gradual and subtle change in Trilby. She was no longer slangy in French, unless it were now and then by a slip of the tongue, no longer so facetious and droll, and yet she seemed even happier than she had ever seemed before.

Also, she grew thinner, especially in the face, where the bones of her cheeks and jaws began to show themselves, and these bones were constructed on such right principles (as were those of her brow and chin and the bridge of her nose) that the improvement was astonishing, almost inexplicable.

Also, she lost her freckles as the summer waned and she herself went less into the open air. And she let her hair grow and made of it a small knot at the back of her head, and showed her little flat ears, which were charming, and just in the right place, very far back and rather high; Little Billee could not have placed them better himself. Also, her mouth, always too large, took on a firmer and sweeter outline, and her big British teeth were so white and regular that even Frenchmen forgave them their British bigness. And a new soft brightness came into her eyes that no one had ever seen there before. They were stars, just twin grey stars—or rather planets just thrown off by some

new sun, for the steady mellow light they gave out was not entirely their own.

Favourite types of beauty change with each succeeding generation. These were the days of Buckner's aristocratic Album beauties, with lofty foreheads, oval faces, little aquiline noses, heart-shaped little mouths, soft dimpled chins, drooping shoulders and long side ringlets that fell over them—the Lady Arabellas and the Lady Clementinas, Musidoras and Medoras! A type that will perhaps come back to us some day.

May the present scribe be dead!

Trilby's type would be infinitely more admired now than in the fifties. Her photograph would be in the shop windows. Sir Edward Burne-Jones—if I may make so bold as to say so—would perhaps have marked her for his own, in spite of her almost too exuberant joyousness and irrepressible vitality. Rossetti might have evolved another new formula from her; Sir John Millais, another old one of the kind that is always new and never sates nor palls—like Clytie, let us say—ever old and ever new as love itself!

Trilby's type was in singular contrast to the type Gavarni had made so popular in the Latin Quarter at the period we are writing of, so that those who fell so readily under her charm were rather apt to wonder why. Moreover, she was thought much too tall for her sex, and her day and her station in life, and especially for the country she lived in. She hardly looked up to a bold gendarme! and a bold gendarme was nearly as tall as a *dragon de la garde*, who was nearly as tall as an average English policeman. Not that she was a giantess, by any means. She was about as tall as Miss Ellen Terry—and that is a charming height, *I* think.

One day Taffy remarked to the Laird: "Hang it! I'm blest if Trilby isn't the handsomest woman I know! She looks like a grande dame masquerading as a grisette—almost like a joyful saint at times. She's lovely! By Jove! I couldn't stand her hugging me as she does you! There'd be a tragedy—say the slaughter of Little Billee."

"Ah, Taffy, my boy," rejoined the Laird, "when those long sisterly arms are round my neck it isn't *me* she's hugging."

"And then," said Taffy, "what a trump she is! Why, she's as upright and straight and honourable as a man! And what she says to one about one's self is always so pleasant to hear! That's Irish, I suppose. And, what's more, it's always true."

"Ah, that's Scotch!" said the Laird, and tried to wink at Little Billee, but Little Billee wasn't there.

Even Svengali perceived the strange metamorphosis. "Ach, Drilpy," he would say on a Sunday afternoon, "how beautiful you are! It drives me mad! I adore you. I like you thinner; you have such beautiful bones! Why do you not answer my letters? What, you do not *read* them? You *burn* them? And yet I—— Donnerwetter! I forgot! The grisettes of the Quartier Latin have not learned how to read or write; they have only learned how to dance the cancan with the dirty little pig-dog monkeys they call men. Sacrement! *We* will teach the little pig-dog monkeys to dance something else some day, we Germans. We will make music for them to dance to! Boum! boum! Better than the waiter at the Café de la Rotonde, *hein?* And the grisettes of the Quartier Latin shall pour us out your little white wine—*votre petit fin planc*, as your pig-dog monkey of a poet says, your rotten *verfluchter* De Musset, 'who has got such a splendid future behind him!' Bah! What do *you* know of Monsieur Alfred de Musset? We have got a poet, too, my Drilpy. His name is Heinrich Heine. If he's still alive, he lives in Paris, in a little street off the Champs Elysées. He lies in bed all day long, and only sees out of one eye, like the Countess Hahn-Hahn, ha! ha! He adores French grisettes. He married one. Her name is Mathilde, and she has got *süssen füssen*, like you. He would adore you, too, for your beautiful bones; he would like to count them one by one, for he is very playful, like me. And, ach! what a beautiful skeleton you will make! And very soon, too, because you do not smile on your madly-loving Svengali. You burn his letters without reading them! You shall have a nice little mahogany glass case all to yourself in the museum of the Ecole de Médecine, and Svengali shall come in his new fur-lined coat, smoking his big cigar of the Havana, and push the dirty carabins out of the way, and look through the holes of your eyes into your stupid empty skull, and up the nostrils of your high, bony sounding-board of a nose without either a tip or a lip to it, and into the roof of your big mouth, with your thirty-two big English teeth, and between your big ribs into your big chest, where the big leather lungs used to be, and say, 'Ach! what a pity she had no more music in her than a big tom-cat!' And then he will look all down your bones to your poor crumbling feet and say, 'Ach! what a fool she was not to answer Svengali's letters!' and the dirty carabins shall——"

"Shut up, you sacred fool, or I'll precious soon spoil *your* skeleton for you."

Thus the short-tempered Taffy, who had been listening.

Then Svengali, scowling, would play Chopin's funeral march more divinely than ever, and where the pretty soft part comes in he would whisper to Trilby, "That is Svengali coming to look at you in your little mahogany glass case!"

And here let me say that these vicious imaginations of Svengali's, which look so tame in English print, sounded much more ghastly in French, pronounced with a Hebrew-German accent, and uttered in his hoarse, rasping, nasal, throaty

rook's caw, his big yellow teeth baring themselves in a mongrel canine snarl, his heavy upper eyelids drooping over his insolent black eyes.

Besides which, as he played the lovely melody he would go through a ghoulish pantomime, as though he were taking stock of the different bones in her skeleton with greedy but discriminating approval. And when he came down to the feet, he was almost droll in the intensity of his terrible realism. But Trilby did not appreciate this exquisite fooling, and felt cold all over.

He seemed to her a dread powerful demon, who, but for Taffy (who alone could hold him in check), oppressed and weighed on her like an incubus—and she dreamed of him oftener than she dreamed of Taffy, the Laird, or even Little Billee!

¶

THUS pleasantly and smoothly, and without much change or adventure, things went on till Christmastime.

Little Billee seldom spoke of Trilby, or Trilby of him. Work went on every morning at the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, and pictures were begun and finished—little pictures that didn't take long to paint—the Laird's Spanish bull-fighting scenes, in which the bull never appeared, and which he sent to his native Dundee and sold there; Taffy's tragic little dramas of life in the slums of Paris—starvings, drownings—suicides by charcoal and poison—which he sent everywhere, but did not sell.

Little Billee was painting all this time at Carrel's studio—his private one—and seemed preoccupied and happy when they all met at meal-time, and less talkative even than usual.

He had always been the least talkative of the three; more prone to listen, and no doubt to think the more.

In the afternoon people came and went as usual, and boxed and fenced and did gymnastic feats, and felt Taffy's biceps, which by this time equalled Mr. Sandow's!

Some of these people were very pleasant and remarkable, and have become famous since then in England, France, America—or have died, or married, and come to grief or glory in other ways. It is the Ballad of the Bouillabaisse all over again!

There was Durien, for instance—Trilby's especial French adorer, *pour le bon motif!* a son of the people, a splendid sculptor, a very fine character in every way—so perfect, indeed, that there is less to say about him than any of the others—modest, earnest, simple, frugal, chaste, and of untiring industry; living for his art, and perhaps also a little for Trilby, whom he would have been only too glad to marry. He was Pygmalion; she was his Galatea—a Galatea whose marble heart would never beat for *him!*

Durien's house is now the finest in the Parc Monceau; his wife and daughters are the best-dressed women in Paris, and he one of the happiest of men; but he will never quite forget poor Galatea

"La belle aux pieds d'albâtre—aux deux talons de rose!"

Then there was Vincent, a Yankee medical student, who could both work and play.

He is now one of the greatest oculists in the world, and Europeans cross the Atlantic to consult him. He can still play, and when he crosses the Atlantic himself for that purpose he has to travel incognito like a royalty, lest his play should be marred by work. And his daughters are so beautiful and accomplished that British dukes have sighed after them in vain. Indeed, these fair young ladies spend their autumn holiday in refusing the British aristocracy. We are told so in the society papers, and I can quite believe it. Love is not always blind; and if he is, Vincent is the man to cure him.

In those days he prescribed for us all round, and punched and stethoscoped us, and looked at our tongues for love, and told us what to eat, drink and avoid, and even where to go for it.

For instance: late one night Little Billee woke up in a cold sweat, and thought himself a dying man—he had felt seedy all day and taken no food; so he dressed and dragged himself to Vincent's hotel, and woke him up and said: "Oh, Vincent, Vincent! I'm a dying man!" and all but fainted on his bed. Vincent felt him all over with the greatest care, and asked him many questions. Then, looking at his watch, he delivered himself thus: "Humph, three-thirty! Rather late—but still—look here, Little Billee—do you know the Halle, on the other side of the water, where they sell vegetables?"

"Oh yes, yes! What vegetable shall I——"

"Listen! On the north side are two restaurants—Bordier and Baratte. They remain open all night. Now go straight off to one of those tuck shops, and tuck in as big a supper as you possibly can. Some people prefer Baratte. I prefer Bordier myself. Perhaps you'd better try Bordier first and Baratte after. At all events, lose no time; so off you go!"

Thus he saved Little Billee from an early grave.

Then there was the Greek, a boy of only sixteen, but six feet high, and looking ten years older than he was, and able to smoke even stronger tobacco than Taffy himself, and colour pipes divinely; he was a great favourite in the Place St. Anatole, for his *bonhomie*, his niceness, his warm geniality. He was the capitalist of this select circle (and nobly lavish of his capital). He went by the name of Poluphloisboiospaleapologos Petrilopetrolicoconose—for so he was christened by the Laird—because his real name was thought much too long; and much too lovely for the Quartier Latin, and reminded one

too much of the Isles of Greece—where burning Sappho loved and sang.

¶

THEN there was Carnegie, fresh from Balliol, redolent of the 'varsity. He intended himself then for the diplomatic service, and came to Paris to learn French as it is spoke; and spent most of his time with his fashionable English friends on the right side of the river, and the rest with Taffy, the Laird, and Little Billee on the left. Perhaps that is why he has not become an ambassador. He is now only a rural dean, and speaks the worst French I know, and speaks it wherever and whenever he can.

It serves him right, I think.

He was fond of lords, and knew some (at least, he gave one that impression), and often talked of them, and dressed so beautifully that even Little Billee was abashed in his presence. Only Taffy, in his threadbare, out-at-elbow shooting-jacket and cricket-cap, and the Laird, in his tattered straw hat and Taffy's old overcoat down to his heels, dared to walk arm-in-arm with him—nay, insisted on doing so—as they listened to the band playing in the Luxembourg Gardens.

And his whiskers were even longer and thicker and more golden than Taffy's own. But the mere sight of a boxing-glove made him positively sick.

Then there was the yellow-haired Antony, a Swiss—the idle apprentice, *le roi des truands*, as we called him—to whom everything was forgiven, as to François Villon, *à cause de ses gentillesses*—surely, for all his reprehensible pranks, the gentlest and most lovable creature that ever lived in Bohemia, or, for the matter of that, out of it.

Always in debt, like Svengali, for he had no more notion of the value of money than a humming-bird, and gave away in reckless generosity to friends what in strictness belonged to his endless creditors; like Svengali, humorous, witty, and a most exquisite and original artist, and also somewhat eccentric in his attire (though scrupulously clean), so that people would stare at him as he walked along—a thing that always gave him dire offence! But, unlike Svengali, full of delicacy, refinement and distinction of mind and manner, void of any self-conceit; and, in spite of the irregularities of his life, the very soul of truth and honour, as gentle as he was chivalrous and brave; the warmest, staunchest, sincerest, most unselfish friend in the world; and, as long as his purse was full, the best and drollest boon companion in the world—but that was not for ever!

When the money was gone, then would Antony hie him to some beggarly attic in some lost Parisian slum, and write his own epitaph in lovely French or German verse—or even English (for he was an astounding linguist); and telling himself that he was forsaken by family, friends and mistress alike, look out of his casement over the Paris chimney-pots for the last time, and listen once more to "the harmonies of nature," as he called it, and "aspire towards the infinite," and bewail "the cruel deceptions of his life," and finally lay himself down to die of sheer starvation.

And as he lay and waited for his release, that was so long in coming, he would beguile the weary hours by mumbling a crust "watered with his own salt tears," and decorating his epitaph with fanciful designs of the most exquisite humour, pathos and beauty; these early illustrated epitaphs of the young Antony, of which there still exist a goodly number, are now priceless, as all collectors know all over the world.

Fainter and fainter would he grow, and finally, on the third day or thereabouts, a remittance would reach him from some long-suffering sister or aunt in far Lausanne; or else the fickle mistress or faithless friend (who had been looking for him all over Paris) would discover his hiding-place, the beautiful epitaph would be walked off in triumph to le père Marcas in the Rue du Ghette and sold for twenty, fifty, a hundred francs; and then *vogue la galère!* and back again to Bohemia, dear Bohemia and all its joys, as long as the money lasted . . . *e poi, da capo!*

And now that his name is a household word in two hemispheres, and he himself an honour and a glory to the land he has adopted as his own, he loves to remember all this, and look back from the lofty pinnacle on which he sits perched up aloft to the impecunious days of his idle apprenticeship—*le bon temps où l'on était si malheureux!*

Then there was Lorrimer, the industrious apprentice, who is now also well pinnacled on high; himself a pillar of the Royal Academy—probably, if he lives long enough, its future president—the duly knighted or baroneted Lord Mayor of "all the plastic arts" (except one or two perhaps, here and there, that are not altogether without some importance).

May this not be for many, many years! Lorrimer himself would be the first to say so!

Tall, thin, red-haired, and well-favoured, he was a most eager, earnest and painstaking young enthusiast, of precocious culture, who read improving books, and did not share in the amusements of the Quartier Latin, but spent his evenings at home with Handel, Michael Angelo, and Dante, on the respectable side of the river. Also, he went into good society sometimes, with a dress-coat on and a white tie, and his hair parted in the middle!

But in spite of these blemishes on his otherwise exemplary record as an art student, he was the most delightful companion—the most affectionate, helpful and sympathetic of friends. May he live long and prosper!

Enthusiast as he was, he could only worship one god at a time. It was either Michael Angelo, Phidias, Paul Veronese, Tintoret, Raphael, or Titian—never a modern—moderns didn't exist! And so thorough-going was he in his worship, and so persistent in voicing it, that he made those immortals quite unpopular in the Place St. Anatole des Arts. We grew to dread their very names. Each of them would last him a couple of months or so; then he would give us a month's holiday, and take up another.

Antony did not think much of Lorrimer in those days, nor Lorrimer of him, for all they were such good friends. And neither of them thought much of Little Billee, whose pinnacle (of pure unadulterated fame) is now the highest of all—the highest probably that can be for a mere painter of pictures!

Oh, ye impecunious, unpinnacled young inseparables of eighteen, nineteen, twenty, even twenty-five, who share each other's thoughts and purses, and wear each other's clothes, and swear each other's oaths, and smoke each other's pipes, and respect each other's lights o' love, and keep each other's secrets, and tell each other's jokes, and pawn each other's watches and merry-make together on the proceeds, and sit all night by each other's bedsides in sickness, and comfort each other in sorrow and disappointment with silent, manly sympathy—"wait till you get to forty year!"

Wait even till each or either of you gets himself a little pinnacle of his own—be it ever so humble!

Nay, wait till either or each of you gets himself a wife!

History goes on repeating itself, and so do novels, and this is a platitude, and there's nothing new under the sun.

May too cecee (as the idiomatic Laird would say in the language he adores)—may too cecee ay nee eecee nee lâh!

¶

THEN there was Dodor, the handsome young *dragon de la garde*—a full private, if you please, with a beardless face and damask-rosy cheeks, and a small waist, and narrow feet like a lady's and who, strange to say, spoke English just like an Englishman.

And his friend Gontran, *alias* l'Zouzou—a corporal in the Zouaves.

Both of these worthies had met Taffy in the Crimea, and frequented the studios in the Quartier Latin, where they adored (and were adored by) the grisettes and models, especially Trilby.

Both of them were distinguished for being the worst subjects (*les plus mauvais garnements*) of their respective regiments; yet both were special favourites not only with their fellow-rankers, but with those in command, from their colonels downward.

Both were in the habit of being promoted to the rank of corporal or brigadier, and degraded to the rank of private next day for general misconduct, the result of a too exuberant delight in their promotion.

Neither of them knew fear, envy, malice, temper, or low spirits; ever said or did an ill-natured thing; ever even thought one; ever had an enemy but himself. Both had the best or the worst manners going, according to their company, whose manners they reflected; they were true chameleons!

Both were always ready to share their last ten-sou piece (not that they ever seemed to have one) with each other or anybody else, or anybody else's last ten-sou piece with you; to offer you a friend's cigar; to invite you to dine with any friend they had; to fight with you, or for you, at a moment's notice. And they made up for all the anxiety, tribulation and sorrow they caused at home by the endless fun and amusement they gave to all outside.

It was a pretty dance they led; but our three friends of the Place St. Anatole (who hadn't got to pay the pipers) loved them both, especially Dodor.

One fine Sunday afternoon Little Billee found himself studying life and character in that most delightful and festive scene la Fête de St. Cloud, and met Dodor and l'Zouzou there, who hailed him with delight, saying:

"Nous allons joliment jubiler, nom d'une pipe!" and insisted on his joining in their amusements and paying for them—round-abouts, swings, the giant, the dwarf, the strong man, the fat woman—to whom they made love and were taken too seriously, and turned out—the menagerie of wild beasts, whom they teased and aggravated till the police had to interfere. Also *al fresco* dances, where their cancan step was of the wildest and most unbridled character, till a *sous-officier* or a gendarme came in sight, and then they danced quite mincingly and demurely, *en maître d'école*, as they called it, to the huge delight of an immense and ever-increasing crowd, and the disgust of all truly respectable men.

They also insisted on Little Billee's walking between them, arm-in-arm, and talking to them in English whenever they saw coming towards them a respectable English family with daughters. It was the dragoon's delight to get himself stared at by fair daughters of Albion for speaking as good English as themselves—a rare accomplishment in a French trooper—and Zouzou's happiness to be thought English, too, though the only English he knew was the phrase, "I will not! I will not!" which he had picked up in the Crimea and repeated over and over again when he came within earshot of a pretty English girl.

Little Billee was not happy in these circumstances. He was no snob. But he was a respectably-brought-up young Briton of the

higher middle class, and it was not quite pleasant for him to be seen (by fair country-women of his own) walking arm-in-arm on a Sunday afternoon with a couple of French private soldiers, and uncommonly rowdy ones at that.

Later, they came back to Paris together on the top of an omnibus, among a very proletarian crowd; and there the two facetious warriors immediately made themselves pleasant all round and became very popular, especially with the women and children; but not, I regret to say, through the propriety, refinement and discretion of their behaviour. Little Billee resolved that he would not go a-pleasuring with them any more.

However, they stuck to him through thick and thin, and insisted on escorting him all the way back to the Quartier Latin by the Pont de la Concorde and the Rue de Lille in the Faubourg St. Germain.

Little Billee loved the Faubourg St. Germain, especially the Rue de Lille. He was fond of gazing at the magnificent old mansions, the *hôtels* of the old French noblesse, or rather the outside walls thereof, the grand sculptured portals with the armorial bearings and the splendid old historic names above them—Hôtel de This, Hôtel de That, Rohan-Chabot, Montmorency, La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, La Tour d'Auvergne.

He would forget himself in romantic dreams of past and forgotten French chivalry which these glorious names called up; for he knew a little of French history, loving to read Froissart and Saint Simon and the genial Brantôme.

Halting opposite one of the finest and oldest of all these gateways, his especial favourite, labelled "Hôtel de la Rochemartel" in letters of faded gold over a ducal coronet and a huge escutcheon of stone, he began to descant upon its architectural beauties and noble proportions to l'Zouzou.

"*Parbleu!*" said l'Zouzou, "*connu, farceur!* Why, I was *born* there, on the 6th of March, 1834, at 5-30 in the morning. Lucky day for France—*hein?*"

"Born there? What do you mean—in the porter's lodge?"

At this juncture the two great gates rolled back, a liveried *Suisse* appeared, and an open carriage and pair came out, and in it were two elderly ladies and a younger one.

To Little Billee's indignation the two incorrigible warriors made the military salute, and the three ladies bowed stiffly and gravely.

And then (to Little Billee's horror this time) one of them happened to look back, and Zouzou actually kissed his hand to her.

"Do you *know* that lady?" asked Little Billee, very sternly.

"*Parbleu! si je la connais!* Why, it's my mother! Isn't she nice? She's rather cross with me just now."

"Your *mother!* Why, what do you mean? What on earth would your mother be doing in that big carriage and at that big house?"

"*Parbleu, farceur!* She lives there!"

"*Lives* there? Why, who and what is she, your mother?"

"The Duchesse de la Rochemartel, *parbleu!* and that's my sister; and that's my aunt, Princesse de Chevagné-Bauffremont! She's the '*patronne*' of that *chic* equipage. She's a millionaire, my aunt Chevagné!"

"Well, I never! What's *your* name, then?"

"Oh, *my* name! Hang it—let me see! Well—Gontran—Xavier—François—Marie—Joseph d'Amaury de Brissac de Roncesvaulx de la Rochemartel-Boisségur, at your service!"

"Quite correct!" said Dodor; "*l'enfant dit vrai!*"

"Well—I—never! And what's *your* name, Dodor?"

"Oh, I'm only a humble individual, and answer to the one-horse name of Théodore Rigolot de Lafarce. But Zouzou's an awful swell, you know—his brother's the Duke!"

Little Billee was no snob. But he was a respectably-brought-up young Briton of the higher middle class, and these revelations, which he could not but believe, astounded him so that he could hardly speak. Much as he flattered himself that he scorned the bloated aristocracy, titles are titles—even French titles!—and when it comes to dukes and princesses who live in houses like the Hôtel de la Rochemartel . . !

It's enough to take a respectably-brought-up young Briton's breath away.

When he saw Taffy that evening, he exclaimed: "I say, Zouzou's mother's a duchess!"

"Yes—the Duchesse de la Rochemartel-Boisségur.'

"You never told me!"

"You never asked me. It's one of the greatest names in France. They're very poor, I believe."

"Poor! You should see the house they live in!"

"I've been there, to dinner; and the dinner wasn't very good. They let a great part of it, and live mostly in the country. The Duke is Zouzou's brother; very unlike Zouzou; he's consumptive and unmarried, and the most respectable man in Paris. Zouzou will be the Duke some day."

"And Dodor—he's a swell, too, I suppose—he says he's *de* something or other!"

"Yes—Rigolot de Lafarce. I've no doubt he descends from the Crusaders, too; the name seems to favour it, anyhow; and such lots of them do in this country. His mother was English, and bore the worthy name of Brown. He was at school in England; that's why he speaks English so well—and behaves so badly, perhaps! He's got a very beautiful sister, married to a man in the 60th Rifles—Jack Reeve, a son of Lord Reevely's; a selfish sort of chap. I don't suppose he gets on very well

with his brother-in-law. Poor Dodor! His sister's about the only living thing he cares for—except Zouzou."

¶

I WONDER if the bland and genial Monsieur Théodore—" notre Sieur Théodore "—now junior partner in the great haberdashery firm of " Passefil et Rigolot," on the Boulevard des Capucines, and a pillar of the English chapel in the Rue Marbœuf, is very hard on his employés and employées if they are a little late at their counters on a Monday morning?

I wonder if that stuck-up, stingy, stodgy, communard-shooting, church-going, time-serving, place-hunting, pious-eyed, pompous old prig, martinet and philistine, Monsieur le Maréchal-Duc de la Rochemartel-Boisségur, ever tells Madame la Maréchale-Duchesse (*née* Hunks, of Chicago) how once upon a time Dodor and he——

We will tell no tales out of school.

The present scribe is no snob. He is a respectably-brought-up old Briton of the higher middle class—at least, he flatters himself so. And he writes for just such old philistines as himself, who date from a time when titles were not thought so cheap as to-day. Alas! all reverence for all that is high and time-honoured and beautiful seems at a discount.

So he has kept his blackguard ducal Zouave for the bouquet of this little show—the final *bonne bouche* in his Bohemian *menu*—that he may make it palatable to those who only look upon the good old Quartier Latin (now no more to speak of) as a very low, common, vulgar quarter indeed, deservedly swept away, where misters the students (shocking bounders and cads) had nothing better to do, day and night, than mount up to a horrid place called the thatched house—*la chaumière*—

> Pour y danser le cancan
> Ou le Robert Macaire—
> Toujours—toujours—toujours—
> La nuit comme le jour . . .
> Et youp! youp! youp!
> Tra la la la la . . . la la la!

Christmas was drawing near.

There were days when the whole Quartier Latin would veil its iniquities under fogs almost worthy of the Thames Valley between London Bridge and Westminster, and out of the studio window the prospect was a dreary blank. No Morgue! No towers of Notre Dame! Not even the chimney-pots over the way—not even the little mediæval toy turret at the corner of the Rue Vieille des Trois Mauvais Ladres, Little Billee's delight!

The stove had to be crammed till its sides grew a dull deep red before one's fingers could hold a brush or squeeze a bladder; one had to box or fence at nine in the morning, that one might recover from the cold bath and get warm for the rest of the day!

Taffy and the Laird grew pensive and dreamy, child-like and bland; and when they talked it was generally about Christmas at home in Merry England and the distant Land of Cakes, and how good it was to be there at such a time—hunting, shooting, curling and endless carouse!

It was Ho! for the jolly West Riding, and Hey! for the bonnets of Bonnie Dundee, till they grew quite homesick, and wanted to start by the very next train.

They didn't do anything so foolish. They wrote over to friends in London for the biggest turkey, the biggest plum-pudding, that could be got for love or money, with mince-pies, and holly and mistletoe, and sturdy, short, thick English sausages; half a Stilton cheese and a sirloin of beef—two sirloins, in case one should not be enough.

For they meant to have a Homeric feast in the studio on Christmas Day—Taffy, the Laird and Little Billee—and invite all the delightful chums I have been trying to describe; and that is just why I tried to describe them—Durien, Vincent, Antony, Lorrimer, Carnegie, Petroli-coconose, l'Zouzou and Dodor!

The cooking and waiting should be done by Trilby, her friend Angèle Boisse, M. et Mme. Vinard, and such little Vinards as could be trusted with glass and crockery and mince-pies; and if that was not enough, they would also cook themselves, and wait upon each other.

When dinner should be over, supper was to follow with scarcely any interval to speak of; and to partake of this other guests should be bidden—Svengali and Gecko, and perhaps one or two more. No ladies!

For, as the unsusceptible Laird expressed it, in the language of a gillie he had once met at a servant's dance in a Highland country-house, " Them wimmen spiles the ball! "

Elaborate cards of invitation were sent out, in the designing and ornamentation of which the Laird and Taffy exhausted all their fancy (Little Billee had no time).

Wines and spirits and English beers were procured at great cost from M. E. Delevingne's, in the Rue St. Honoré, and liqueurs of every description—chartreuse, curaçoa, *ratafia de cassis*, and anisette; no expense was spared.

Also, truffled galantines of turkey, tongues, hams, *rillettes de Tours, pâtés de foie gras, fromage d'Italie* (which has nothing to do with cheese), *saucissons d'Arles et de Lyon*, with and without garlic, cold jellies peppery and salt—everything that French *charcutiers* and their wives can make out of French pigs, or any other animal whatever, beast, bird, or fowl (even cats and rats), for the supper; and sweet jellies and cakes, and sweetmeats, and confections of all kinds, from the famous pastry-cook at the corner of the Rue Castiglione.

Mouths went watering all day long in joyful

anticipation. They water somewhat sadly now at the mere remembrance of these delicious things—the mere immediate sight or scent of which in these degenerate latter days would no longer avail to promote any such delectable secretion. *Hélas ! aimé ! ach weh ! ay de mi ! ehen !*—in point of fact, *alas !*

That is the very exclamation I wanted.

Christmas Eve came round. The pieces of resistance and plum-pudding and mince-pies had not yet arrived from London—but there was plenty of time.

Les trois Angliches dined at le père Trin's, as usual, and played billiards and dominoes at the Café du Luxembourg, and possessed their souls in patience till it was time to go and hear the midnight mass at the Madeleine, where Roucouly, the great baritone of the Opéra Comique, was retained to sing Adam's famous Noël.

The whole Quartier seemed alive with the *réveillon*. It was a clear, frosty night, with a splendid moon just past the full, and most exhilarating was the walk along the quays on the Rive Gauche, over the Pont de la Concorde and across the Place thereof, and up the thronged Rue de la Madeleine to the massive Parthenaic place of worship that always has such a pagan, worldly look of smug and prosperous modernity.

They struggled manfully, and found standing and kneeling room among that fervent crowd, and heard the impressive service with mixed feelings, as became true Britons of very advanced liberal and religious opinions; not with the unmixed contempt of the proper British Orthodox (who were there in full force, one may be sure).

But their susceptible hearts soon melted at the beautiful music, and in mere sensuous *attendrissement* they were quickly in unison with all the rest.

For as the clock struck twelve out pealed the organ, and up rose the finest voice in France:

" Minuit, Chrétiens ! c'est l'heure solennelle
Où l'Homme-Dieu descendit parmi nous ! "

And a wave of religious emotion rolled over Little Billee and submerged him; swept him off his little legs, swept him out of his little self, drowned him in a great seething surge of love—love of his kind, love of love, love of life, love of death, love of all that is and ever was and ever will be—a very large order indeed, even for Little Billee.

And it seemed to him that he stretched out his arms for love to one figure especially beloved beyond all the rest—one figure erect on high with arms outstretched to him, in more than common fellowship of need; not the sorrowful figure crowned with thorns, for it was in the likeness of a woman; but never that of the Virgin Mother of Our Lord.

It was Trilby, Trilby, Trilby ! a poor fallen sinner and waif all but lost amid the scum of the most corrupt city on earth. Trilby, weak and mortal like himself, and in woeful want of pardon ! and in her grey dove-like eyes he saw the shining of so great a love that he was abashed; for well he knew that all that love was his, and would be his for ever, come what would or could.

Peuple, debout ! Chante ta délivrance !
Noël ! Noël ! Voici le Rédempteur ! "

So sang and rang and pealed and echoed the big, deep, metallic baritone bass—above the organ, above the incense, above everything else in the world—till the very universe seemed to shake with the rolling thunder of that great message of love and forgiveness !

Thus at least felt Little Billee, whose way it was to magnify and exaggerate all things under the subtle stimulus of sound, and the singing human voice had especially strange power to penetrate into his inmost depths—even the voice of man !

And what voice but the deepest and gravest and grandest there is can give worthy utterance to such a message as that, the epitome, the abstract, the very essence of all collective humanity's wisdom at its best !

Little Billee reached the Hôtel Corneille that night in a very exalted frame of mind indeed; the loftiest, lowliest mood of all.

Now see what sport we are of trivial, base, ignoble earthly things !

Sitting on the doorstep and smoking two cigars at once, he found Ribot, one of his fellow-lodgers, whose room was just under his own. Ribot was so tipsy that he could not ring. But he could still sing, and did so at the top of his voice. It was not the Noël of Adam that he sang. He had not spent his *réveillon* in any church.

With the help of a sleepy waiter, Little Billee got the bacchanalian into his room and lit his candle for him, and, disengaging himself from his maudlin embraces, left him to wallow in solitude.

As he lay awake in his bed, trying to recall the deep and high emotions of the evening, he heard the tipsy hog below tumbling about his room and still trying to sing his senseless ditty:

" Allons, Glycère !
Rougis mon verre
Du jus divin dont mon cœur est toujours jaloux . . .
Et puis à table,
Bacchante aimable !
Enivrons-nous (hic) Les g-glougloux sont des rendez-vous ! " . . .

Then the song ceased for a while, and soon there were other sounds, as on a Channel steamer. Glougloux indeed !

Then the fear arose in Little Billee's mind lest the drunken beast should set fire to his bedroom curtains. All heavenly visions were chased away for the night. . . .

Our hero, half crazed with fear, disgust and

irritation, lay wide awake, his nostrils on the watch for the smell of burning chintz or muslin, and wondered how an educated man—for Ribot was a law-student—could ever make such a filthy beast of himself as that! It was a scandal—a disgrace; it was not to be borne; there should be no forgiveness for such as Ribot—not even on Christmas Day! He would complain to Madame Paul, the *patronne;* he would have Ribot turned out into the street; he would leave the hotel himself the very next morning! At last he fell asleep, thinking of all he would do; and thus, ridiculously and ignominiously for Little Billee, ended the *réveillon.*

Next morning he complained to Madame Paul; and though he did not give her warning, nor even insist on the expulsion of Ribot (who, as he heard with a hard heart, was *bien malade ce matin*), he expressed himself very severely on the conduct of that gentleman, and on the dangers from fire that might arise from a tipsy man being trusted alone in a small bedroom with chintz curtains and a lighted candle. If it hadn't been for himself, he told her, Ribot would have slept on the doorstep, and serve him right! He was really grand in his virtuous indignation, in spite of his imperfect French; and Madame Paul was deeply contrite for her peccant lodger, and profuse in her apologies; and Little Billee began his twenty-first Christmas Day like a Pharisee, thanking his star that he was not as Ribot!

CHAPTER IV

MID-DAY had struck. The expected hamper had not turned up in the Place St. Anatole des Arts.

All Madame Vinard's kitchen battery was in readiness; Trilby and Madame Angèle Boisse were in the studio, their sleeves turned up, and ready to begin.

At twelve the *trois* Angliches and the two fair *lanchisseuses* sat down to lunch in a very anxious frame of mind, and finished a *pâté de foie gras* and two bottles of Burgundy between them, such was their disquietude.

The guests had been invited for six o'clock.

Most elaborately they laid the cloth on the table they had borrowed from the Hôtel de Seine, and settled who was to sit next to whom, and then unsettled it, and quarrelled over it—Trilby, as was her wont in such matters, assuming an authority that did not rightly belong to her, and of course getting her own way in the end.

And that, as the Laird remarked, was her confounded Trilbyness.

Two o'clock—three—four—but no hamper! Darkness had almost set in. It was simply maddening. They knelt on the divan, with their elbows on the window-sill, and watched the street-lamps popping into life along the quays—and looked out through the gathering dusk for the van from the Chemin de Fer du Nord—and gloomily thought of the Morgue, which they could still make out across the river.

At length the Laird and Trilby went off in a cab to the station—a long drive—and, lo! before they came back the long-expected hamper arrived at six o'clock.

And with it Durien, Vincent, Antony, Lorrimer, Carnegie, Petrolicoconose, Dodor and l'Zouzou—the last two in uniform, as usual.

And suddenly the studio, which had been so silent, dark and dull, with Taffy and Little Billee sitting hopeless and despondent round the stove, became a scene of the noisiest, busiest and cheerfulest animation. The three big lamps were lit, and all the Chinese lanterns. The pieces of resistance and the pudding were whisked off by Trilby, Angèle and Madame Vinard to other regions—the porter's lodge and Durien's studio (which had been lent for the purpose); and everyone was pressed into the preparations for the banquet. There was plenty for idle hands to do. Sausages to be fried for the turkey, stuffing made and sauces, salads mixed, and punch—holly hung in festoons all round and about—a thousand things. Everybody was so clever and good-humoured that nobody got in anybody's way—not even Carnegie who was in evening-dress (to the Laird's delight). So they made him do the scullion's work—cleaning, rinsing, peeling, etc.

The cooking of the dinner was almost better fun than the eating of it. And though there were so many cooks, not even the broth was spoiled (cockaleekie, from a receipt of the Laird's).

It was ten o'clock before they sat down to that most memorable repast.

Zouzou and Dodor, who had been the most useful and energetic of all its cooks, apparently quite forgot they were due at their respective barracks at that very moment; they had only been able to obtain *la permission de dix heures.* If they remembered it, the certainty that next day Zouzou would be reduced to the ranks for the fifth time, and Dodor confined to his barracks for a month, did not trouble them in the least.

The waiting was as good as the cooking. The handsome, quick, authoritative Madame Vinard was in a dozen places at once, and openly prompted, rebuked and bullyragged her husband into a proper smartness. The pretty little Madame Angèle moved about as deftly and as quietly as a mouse; which, of course, did not prevent them both from genially joining in the general conversation whenever it wandered into French.

Trilby, tall, graceful and stately, and also swift of action, though more like Juno or Diana than Hebe, devoted herself more especially to her own particular favourites—Durien, Taffy, the Laird, Little Billee—and Dodor and Zouzou,

whom she loved, and *tutoyé'd en bonne camarade* as she served them with all there was of the choicest.

The two little Vinards did their little best—they scrupulously respected the mince-pies, and only broke two bottles of oil and one of Harvey sauce, which made their mother furious. To console them, the Laird took one of them on each knee and gave them of his share of plum-pudding and many other unaccustomed good things, so bad for them.

The genteel Carnegie had never been at such a queer scene in his life. It opened his mind—and Dodor and Zouzou, between whom he sat (the Laird thought it would do him good to sit between a private soldier and a humble corporal), taught him more French than he had learned during the three months he had spent in Paris. It was a speciality of theirs. It was more colloquial than what is generally used in diplomatic circles, and stuck longer in the memory; but it hasn't interfered with his preferment in the Church.

He quite unbent. He was the first to volunteer a song (without being asked) when the pipes and cigars were lit, and after the usual toasts had been drunk—Her Majesty's health, Tennyson, Thackeray and Dickens; and John Leech.

He sang with a very cracked and rather hiccupy voice his only song (it seems)—an English one, of which the burden, he explained, was French:

"Veeverler veeverler veeverler vee
Veeverler companyee!"

And Zouzou and Dodor complimented him so profusely on his French accent that he was with difficulty prevented from singing it all over again.

Then everybody sang in rotation.

The Laird, with a capital baritone, sang:

"Hie diddle dee for the Lowlands low,"

which was encored.

Little Billee sang "Little Billee."

Vincent sang:

"Old Joe kicking up behind and afore,
And the yaller gal a-kicking up behind old Joe."

A capital song, with words of quite a masterly scansion.

Antony sang "Le Sire de Framboisy." Enthusiastic encore.

Lorrimer, inspired no doubt by the occasion, sang the "Hallelujah Chorus," and accompanied himself on the piano, but failed to obtain an encore.

Durien sang:

"Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment;
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie . . .

It was his favourite song, and is one of the beautiful songs of the world, and he sang it very well—and it became popular in the Quartier Latin ever after.

The Greek couldn't sing, and very wisely didn't.

Zouzou sang capitally a capital song in praise of *le vin à quat' sous!*

Taffy, in a voice like a high wind (and with a very good imitation of the Yorkshire brogue), sang a Somersetshire hunting ditty, ending:

"Of this 'ere song should I be axed the reason for to show,
I don't exactly know, I don't exactly know!
But all my fancy dwells upon Nancy,
And I sing Tally-ho!"

It is a quite super-excellent ditty, and haunts my memory to this day; and one felt sure that Nancy was a dear and a sweet, wherever she lived, and when. So Taffy was encored twice—once for her sake, once for his own.

And finally, to the surprise of all, the bold dragoon sang (in English), "My Sister Dear" out of *Masaniello*, with such pathos, and in a voice so sweet and high and well in tune that his audience felt almost weepy in the midst of their jollification; and grew quite sentimental, as Englishmen abroad are apt to do when they are rather tipsy and hear pretty music, and think of their dear sisters across the sea, or their friends' dear sisters.

Madame Vinard interrupted her Christmas dinner on the model-throne to listen, and wept and wiped her eyes quite openly, and remarked to Madame Boisse, who stood modestly close by: "Il est gentil tout plein, ce dragon! Mon Dieu! comme il chante bien! Il est Angliche aussi, il paraît. Ils sont joliment bien élevés, tous ces Angliches—tous plus gentils les uns que les autres! et quant à Monsieur Litrebili, on lui donnerait le bon Dieu sans confession!"

And Madame Boisse agreed.

Then Svengali and Gecko came, and the table had to be laid and decorated anew, for it was supper-time.

Supper was even jollier than dinner, which had taken off the keen edge of the appetites, so that everyone talked at once—the true test of a successful supper—except when Antony told some of his experiences of Bohemia; for instance, how, after staying at home all day for a month to avoid his creditors, he became reckless one Sunday morning, and went to the Bains Deligny, and jumped into a deep part by mistake, and was saved from a watery grave by a bold swimmer, who turned out to be his bootmaker, Satory, to whom he owed sixty francs—of all his duns the one he dreaded the most, and who didn't let him go in a hurry.

Whereupon Svengali remarked that he also owed sixty francs to Satory—"Mais comme che ne me baigne chamais, che n'ai rien à craindre!"

Whereupon there was such a laugh that Svengali felt he had scored off Antony at last, and had a prettier wit. He flattered himself that he'd got the laugh of Antony *this* time.

And after supper Svengali and Gecko made such lovely music that everybody was sobered and athirst again, and the punch-bowl, wreathed

with holly and mistletoe, was placed in the middle of the table, and clean glasses set all round it.

Then Dodor and l'Zouzou stood up to dance with Trilby and Madame Angèle, and executed a series of cancan steps, which, though they were so inimitably droll that they had each and all to be encored, were such that not one of them need have brought the blush of shame to the cheek of modesty.

Then the Laird danced a sword-dance over two T-squares and broke them both. And Taffy, baring his mighty arms to the admiring gaze of all, did dumb-bell exercises, with Little Billee for a dumb-bell, and all but dropped him into the punch-bowl; and tried to cut a pewter ladle in two with Dodor's sabre, and sent it through the window; and this made him cross, so that he abused French sabres and said they were made of worse pewter than even French ladles; and the Laird sententiously opined that they managed these things better in England and winked at Little Billee.

Then they played at "cock-fighting," with their wrists tied across their shins, and a broom-stick thrust in between; thus manacled, you are placed opposite your antagonist, and try to upset him with your feet, and he you. It is a very good game. The cuirassier and the Zouave playing at this got so angry, and were so irresistibly funny a sight, that the shouts of laughter could be heard on the other side of the river, so that a *sergent-de-ville* came in and civilly requested them not to make so much noise. They were disturbing the whole Quartier, he said, and there was quite a *rassemblement* outside. So they made him tipsy, and also another policeman, who came to look after his comrade, and yet another; and these guardians of the peace of Paris were trussed and made to play at cock-fighting, and were still funnier than the two soldiers, and laughed louder and made more noise than anyone else, so that Madame Vinard had to remonstrate with them, till they got too tipsy to speak, and fell fast asleep, and were laid next to each other behind the stove.

¶

THEN M. and Mme. Vinard and Trilby and Angèle Boisse bade the company good-night, Trilby being the last of them to leave.

Little Billee took her to the top of the staircase, and there he said to her:

"Trilby, I have asked you nineteen times, and you have refused. Trilby, once more, on Christmas night, for the twentieth time—*will* you marry me? If not, I leave Paris to-morrow morning and never come back. I swear it on my word of honour!"

Trilby turned very pale and leaned her back against the wall and covered her face with her hands.

Little Billee pulled them away.

"Answer me, Trilby!"

"God forgive me, *yes!*" said Trilby, and she ran downstairs, weeping.

It was now very late.

It soon became evident that Little Billee was in extraordinarily high spirits—in an abnormal state of excitement.

He challenged Svengali to spar, and made his nose bleed, and frightened him out of his sardonic wits. He performed wonderful and quite unsuspected feats of strength. He swore eternal friendship to Dodor and Zouzou, and filled their glasses again and again, and also (in his innocence) his own, and *trinqué'd* with them many times running. They were the last to leave (except the three helpless policemen); and at about five or six in the morning, to his surprise, he found himself walking between Dodor and Zouzou by a late windy moonlight in the Rue Vieille des Trois Mauvais Ladres, now on one side of the frozen gutter, now on the other, now in the middle of it, stopping them now and then to tell them how jolly they were and how dearly he loved them.

Presently his hat flew away, and went rolling and skipping and bounding up the narrow street, and they discovered that as soon as they let each other go to run after it, they all three sat down.

So Dodor and Little Billee remained sitting, with their arms round each other's necks and their feet in the gutter, while Zouzou went after the hat on all fours, and caught it and brought it back in his mouth like a tipsy retriever. Little Billee wept for sheer love and gratitude, and called him a cary*hat*ide (in English), and laughed loudly at his own wit, which was quite thrown away on Zouzou! "No man ever *had* such dear, dear frenge! No man ever *was* s'happy!"

After sitting for a while in love and amity, they managed to get up on their feet again, each helping the other; and in some never-to-be remembered way they reached the Hôtel Corneille.

There they sat Little Billee on the doorstep, and rang the bell, and seeing someone coming up the Place de l'Odéon, and fearing he might be a *sergent-de-ville*, they bid Little Billee a most affectionate but hasty farewell, kissing him on both cheeks in French fashion, and contrived to get themselves round the corner and out of sight.

Little Billee tried to sing Zouzou's drinking-song:

"Quoi de plus doux
Que les glougloux—
Les glougloux du vin à quat' sous. . . ."

The stranger came up. Fortunately it was no *sergent-de-ville*, but Ribot, just back from a Christmas-tree and a little family dance at his aunt's, Madame Kolb (the Alsatian banker's wife, in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin).

Next morning poor Little Billee was dreadfully ill.

He had passed a terrible night. His bed had heaved like the ocean, with oceanic results. He had forgotten to put out his candle, but fortunately Ribot had blown it out for him, after putting him to bed and tucking him up like a real good Samaritan.

And next morning, when Madame Paul brought him a cup of *tisane de chiendent* (which does not happen to mean a hair of the dog that bit him), she was kind, but very severe on the dangers and disgrace of intoxication, and talked to him like a mother.

"If it had not been for kind Monsieur Ribot" (she told him), "the doorstep would have been his portion; and who could say he didn't deserve it? And then think of the danger of fire from a tipsy man all alone in a small bedroom with chintz curtains and a lighted candle!"

"Ribot was kind enough to blow out my candle," said Little Billee, humbly.

"Ah, Dame!" said Madame Paul, with much meaning, "au moins il a *bon cœur*, Monsieur Ribot!"

And the cruellest sting of all was when the good-natured and incorrigibly festive Ribot came and sat by his bedside, and was kind and tenderly sympathetic, and got him a pick-me-up from the chemist's (unbeknown to Madame Paul).

"Credieu! vous vous êtes crânement bien amusé, hier soir! quelle bosse, hein! je parie que c'était plus drôle que chez ma tante Kolb!"

All of which, of course, it is unnecessary to translate; except, perhaps, the word *bosse*, which stands for *noce*, which stands for a "jolly good spree."

In all his innocent little life Little Billee had never dreamed of such humiliation as this—such ignominious depths of shame and misery and remorse! He did not care to live. He had but one longing: that Trilby, dear Trilby, kind Trilby, would come and pillow his head on her beautiful white English bosom, and lay her soft, cool, tender hand on his aching brow, and there let him go to sleep, and sleeping, die!

He slept and slept, with no better rest for his aching brow than the pillow of his bed in the Hôtel Corneille, and failed to die this time. And when, after some forty-eight hours or so, he had quite slept off the fumes of that memorable Christmas debauch, he found that a sad thing had happened to him, and a strange!

It was as though a tarnishing breath had swept over the reminiscent mirror of his mind and left a little film behind it, so that no past thing he wished to see therein was reflected with quite the old pristine clearness. As though the keen, quick, razor-like edge of his power to reach and re-evoke the bygone charm and glamour and essence of things had been blunted and coarsened. As though the bloom of that special joy, the gift he unconsciously had of recalling past emotions and sensations and situations, and making them actual once more by a mere effort of the will, had been brushed away.

And he never recovered the full use of that most precious faculty, the boon of youth and happy childhood, and which he had once possessed, without knowing it, in such singular and exceptional completeness. He was to lose other precious faculties of his over-rich and complex nature—to be pruned and clipped and thinned—that his one supreme faculty of painting might have elbow-room to reach its fullest, or else you could never have seen the wood for the trees (or *vice versa*—which is it?)

¶

ON New Year's Day Taffy and the Laird were at their work in the studio, when there was a knock at the door, and Monsieur Vinard, cap in hand, respectfully introduced a pair of visitors, an English lady and gentleman.

The gentleman was a clergyman, small, thin, round-shouldered, with a long neck; weak-eyed and dryly polite. The lady was middle-aged, though still young-looking; very pretty, with grey hair; very well dressed; very small, full of nervous energy, with tiny hands and feet. It was Little Billee's mother; and the clergyman, the Rev. Thomas Bagot, was her brother-in-law.

Their faces were full of trouble—so much so that the two painters did not even apologise for the carelessness of their attire or for the odour of tobacco that filled the room. Little Billee's mother recognised the two painters at a glance, from the sketches and descriptions of which her son's letters were always full.

They all sat down.

After a moment's embarrassed silence, Mrs. Bagot exclaimed, addressing Taffy: "Mr. Wynne, we are in terrible distress of mind. I don't know if my son has told you, but on Christmas day he engaged himself to be married!"

"To—be—*married!*" exclaimed Taffy and the Laird, for whom this was news indeed.

"Yes—to be married to a Miss Trilby O'Ferrall, who, from what he implies, is in quite a different position in life from himself. Do you know the lady, Mr. Wynne?"

"Oh, yes! I know her very well indeed; we *all* know her."

"Is she English?"

"She's an English subject, I believe."

"Is she a Protestant or a Roman Catholic?" inquired the clergyman.

"A—a—upon my word, I really don't know!"

"You know her very well indeed, and you *don't—know—that*, Mr. Wynne!" exclaimed Mr. Bagot.

"Is she a *lady*, Mr. Wynne?" asked Mrs. Bagot, somewhat impatiently, as if that were a much more important matter.

By this time the Laird had managed to basely

desert his friend; had got himself into his bedroom, and from thence, by another door, into the street and away.

"A lady?" said Taffy; "a—it so much depends upon what that word exactly means, you know; things are so—a—so different here. Her father was a gentleman, I believe—a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge—and a clergyman, if *that* means anything! . . . he was unfortunate and all that—a—intemperate, I fear, and not successful in life. He has been dead six or seven years."

"And her mother?"

"I really know very little about her mother, except that she was very handsome, I believe, and of inferior social rank to her husband. She's also dead; she died soon after him."

"What is the young lady, then? An English governess, or something of that sort?"

"Oh, no, no—a—nothing of *that* sort," said Taffy (and inwardly, "You coward—you cad of a Scotch thief of a sneak of a Laird—to leave all this to me!")

"What? Has she independent means of her own, then?"

"A—not that I know of; I should even say, decidedly not!"

"What *is* she, then? She's at least respectable, I hope?"

"At present she's a—a *blanchisseuse de fin*—that is considered respectable here."

"Why, that's a washerwoman, isn't it?"

"Well—rather better than that, perhaps—*de fin*, you know!—things are so different in Paris! I don't think you'd say she was very much like a washerwoman—to look at!"

"Is she so good-looking, then?"

"Oh, yes; extremely so. You may well say that—very beautiful, indeed—about that, at least, there is no doubt whatever!"

"And of unblemished character?"

Taffy, red and perspiring as if he were going through his Indian-club exercise, was silent—and his face expressed a miserable perplexity. But nothing could equal the anxious misery of those two maternal eyes, so wistfully fixed on his.

After some seconds of a most painful stillness, the lady said, "Can't you—oh, *can't* you give me an answer, Mr. Wynne?"

"Oh, Mrs. Bagot, you have placed me in a terrible position! I—I love your son just as if he were my own brother! This engagement is a complete surprise to me—a most painful surprise! I'd thought of many possible things, but never of *that!* I cannot—I really *must* not conceal from you that it would be an unfortunate marriage for your son—from a—a worldly point of view, you know—although both I and M'Allister have a very deep and warm regard for poor Trilby O'Ferrall—indeed, a great admiration and affection and respect. She was once a model."

"A *model*, Mr. Wynne? What sort of a model: there are models and models, of course?"

"Well, a model of every sort, in every possible sense of the word—head, hands, feet, everything!"

"A model for the *figure?*"

"Well—yes!"

"Oh, my God—my God—my God!" cried Mrs. Bagot—and she got up and walked up and down the studio in a most terrible state of agitation, her brother-in-law following her and begging her to control herself. Her exclamations seemed to shock him, and she didn't seem to care.

"Oh, Mr. Wynne—Mr. Wynne! If you only *knew* what my son is to me—to all of us—always has been! He has been with us all his life, till he came to this wicked, accursed city! My poor husband would never hear of his going to any school, for fear of all the harm he might learn there. My son was as innocent and pure-minded as any girl, Mr. Wynne—I could have trusted him anywhere—and that's why I gave way and allowed him to come *here*, of all places in the world—all alone. Oh, I should have come with him! Fool—fool—fool that I was! . . .

"Oh, Mr. Wynne, he won't see either his mother or his uncle! I found a letter from him at the hotel, saying he'd left Paris—and I don't even know where he's gone! . . . Can't *you*, can't Mr. M'Allister do *anything* to avert this miserable disaster? You don't know how he loves you both—you should see his letters to

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me and to his sister: they are always full of you!"

"Indeed, Mrs. Bagot—you can count on M'Allister and me for doing everything in our power! But it is of no use our trying to influence your son—I feel quite sure of *that!* It is to *her* we must make our appeal."

"Oh, Mr. Wynne, to a washerwoman—a figure model—and Heaven knows what besides, and with such a chance as this!"

"Mrs. Bagot, you don't know her! She may have been all that. But strange as it may seem to you—and seems to me, for that matter—she's a—she's—upon my word of honour, I really think she's about the best woman I ever met—the most unselfish—the most——'

"Ah! She's a *beautiful* woman—I can well see *that!*"

"She has a beautiful nature, Mrs. Bagot—you may believe me or not, as you like—and it is to that I shall make my appeal, as your son's friend, who has his interests at heart. And let me tell you that deeply as I grieve for you in your present distress, my grief and concern for her are far greater!"

"What, grief for her if she marries my son!"

"No, indeed—but if she refuses to marry him. She may not do so, of course—but my instinct tells me she will!"

"Oh, Mr. Wynne, is that likely?"

"I will do my best to make it so—with such an utter trust in her unselfish goodness of heart and her passionate affection for your son as——"

"How do you know she has all this passionate affection for him?"

"Oh, M'Allister and I have long guessed it—though we never thought this particular thing would come of it. I think, perhaps, that first of all you ought to see her yourself—you would get quite a new idea of what she really is—you would be surprised, I assure you."

Mrs. Bagot shrugged her shoulders impatiently, and there was silence for a minute or two.

¶

AND then, just as in a play, Trilby's "Milk below!" was sounded at the door, and Trilby came into the little ante-chamber and, seeing strangers, was about to turn back. She was dressed as a grisette, in her Sunday gown and pretty white cap (for it was New Year's Day), and looking her very best.

Taffy called out: "Come in, Trilby!"

And Trilby came into the studio.

As soon as she saw Mrs. Bagot's face she stopped short—erect, her shoulders a little high, her mouth a little open, her eyes wide with fright—and pale to the lips—a pathetic, yet commanding, magnificent, and most distinguished apparition, in spite of her humble attire.

The little lady got up and walked straight to her, and looked up into her face, that seemed to tower so. Trilby breathed hard.

At length Mrs. Bagot said, in her high accents: "You are Miss Trilby O'Ferrall?"

"Oh, yes—yes—I am Trilby O'Ferrall, and you are Mrs. Bagot; I can see that!"

A new tone had come into her large, deep, soft voice, so tragic, so touching, so strangely in accord with her whole aspect just then—so strangely in accord with the whole situation—that Taffy felt his cheeks and lips turn cold, and his big spine thrill and tickle all down his back.

"Oh, yes; you are very, very beautiful—there's no doubt about *that!* You wish to marry my son?"

"I've refused to marry him nineteen times—for his own sake; he will tell you so himself. I am not the right person for him to marry. I know that. On Christmas night he asked me for the twentieth time; he swore he would leave Paris next day for ever if I refused him. I hadn't the courage. I was weak, you see! It was a dreadful mistake."

"Are you so fond of him?"

"*Fond* of him? Aren't *you?*"

"I'm his mother, my good girl!"

To this Trilby seemed to have nothing to say.

"You have just said yourself you are not a fit wife for him. If you are so *fond* of him, will you ruin him by marrying him; drag him down; prevent him from getting on in life; separate him from his sister, his family, his friends?"

Trilby turned her miserable eyes to Taffy's miserable face, and said: "Will it really be all that, Taffy?"

"Oh, Trilby, things have got all wrong, and can't be righted! I'm afraid it might be so. Dear Trilby—I can't tell you what I feel—but I can't tell you lies, you know!"

"Oh, no—Taffy—you don't tell lies!"

Then Trilby began to tremble very much, and Taffy tried to make her sit down, but she wouldn't. Mrs. Bagot looked up into her face, herself breathless with keen suspense and cruel anxiety—almost imploring.

Trilby looked down at Mrs. Bagot very kindly, put out her shaking hand, and said: "Good-bye, Mrs. Bagot. I will not marry your son. I *promise* you. I will never see him again."

Mrs. Bagot caught and clasped her hand and tried to kiss it, and said: "Don't go yet, my dear good girl. I want to talk to you. I want to tell you how deeply I——"

"Good-bye, Mrs. Bagot," said Trilby once more; and disengaging her hand, she walked swiftly out of the room.

Mrs. Bagot seemed stupefied, and only half content with her quick triumph.

"She will not marry your son, Mrs. Bagot. I only wish to God she'd marry *me!*"

"Oh, Mr. Wynne!" said Mrs. Bagot, and burst into tears.

"Ah!" exclaimed the clergyman, with a

feebly satirical smile and a little cough and sniff that were not sympathetic, "now if *that* could be arranged—and I've no doubt there wouldn't be much opposition on the part of the lady"—(here he made a little complimentary bow)—"it would be a very desirable thing all round!

"It's tremendously good of you, I'm sure—to interest yourself in *my* humble affairs," said Taffy. "Look here, sir—I'm not a great genius like your nephew—and it doesn't much matter to anyone but myself what I make of my life—but I can assure you that if Trilby's heart were set on me as it is on him, I would gladly cast in my lot with hers for life. She's one in a thousand. She's the one sinner that repenteth, you know?"

"Ah, yes—to be sure—to be sure! I know all about that; still, facts are facts, and the world is the world, and we've got to live in it," said Mr. Bagot, whose satirical smile had died away under the gleam of Taffy's choleric blue eye.

Then said the good Taffy, frowning down on the parson (who looked mean and foolish, as people can sometimes do even with right on their side): "And now, Mr. Bagot—I can't tell you how very keenly I have suffered during this—a—this most painful interview—on account of my very deep regard for Trilby O'Ferrall. I congratulate you and your sister-in-law on its complete success. I also feel very deeply for your nephew. I'm not sure that he has not lost more than he will gain by—a—by the—a—the success of this—a—this interview, in short!"

Taffy's eloquence was exhausted, and his quick temper was getting the better of him.

Then Mrs. Bagot, drying her eyes, came and took his hand in a very charming and simple manner, and said: "Mr. Wynne, I think I know what you are feeling just now. You must try and make some allowance for us. You will, I am sure, when we are gone, and you have had time to think a little. As for that noble and beautiful girl, I only wish that she were such that my son *could* marry her—in her past life, I mean. It is not her humble rank that would frighten me; *pray* believe that I am quite sincere in this—and don't think too hardly of your friend's mother. Think of all I shall have to go through with my poor son—who is deeply in love—and no wonder!—and who has won the love of such a woman as that! and who cannot see at present how fatal to him such a marriage would be. I can see all the charm and believe in all the goodness, in spite of all. And, oh, how beautiful she is, and what a voice! All that counts for so much, doesn't it? I cannot tell you how I grieve for her. I can make no amends—who could for such a thing? There are no amends, and I shall not even try. I will only write and tell her all I think and feel. You will forgive us, won't you?"

And in the quick, impulsive warmth and grace and sincerity of her manner as she said all this, Mrs. Bagot was so absurdly like Little Billee that it touched big Taffy's heart, and he would have forgiven anything, and there was nothing to forgive.

"Oh, Mrs. Bagot, there's no question of forgiveness. Good heavens, it is all so unfortunate you know! Nobody's to blame, that I can see. Good-bye, Mrs. Bagot; good-bye, sir." And so saying, he saw them down to their *remise*, in which sat a singularly pretty young lady of seventeen or so, pale and anxious, and so like Little Billee that it was quite funny, and touched big Taffy's heart again.

¶

WHEN Trilby went out into the courtyard in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, she saw Miss Bagot looking out of the carriage window, and in the young lady's face, as she caught her eye, an expression of sweet surprise and sympathetic admiration, with lifted eyebrows and parted lips—just such a look as she had often got from Little Billee! She knew her for his sister at once. It was a sharp pang.

She turned away, saying to herself: "Oh, no; I will not separate him from his sister, his family, his friends! That would *never* do! *That's* settled, anyhow!"

Feeling a little dazed, and wishing to think, she turned up the Rue Vieille des Mauvais Ladres, which was always deserted at this hour. It was empty, but for a solitary figure sitting on a post, with its legs dangling, its hands in its trousers pockets, an inverted pipe in its mouth, a tattered straw hat on the back of its head, and a long grey coat down to its heels. It was the Laird.

As soon as he saw her he jumped off his post and came to her, saying: "Oh, Trilby—what's it all about? I couldn't stand it! I ran away! Little Billee's mother's there!"

"Yes, Sandy dear, I've just seen her."

"Well, what's up?"

"I've promised her never to see Little Billee any more. I was foolish enough to promise to marry him. I refused many times these last three months, and then he said he'd leave Paris and never come back, and so, like a fool, I gave way. I've offered to live with him and take care of him and be his servant—to be everything he wished but his wife! But he wouldn't hear of it. Dear, dear Little Billee, he's an angel—and I'll take precious good care no harm shall ever come to him through me! I shall leave this hateful place and go and live in the country; I suppose I must manage to get through life somehow. . . . Days are so long—*aren't* they, and there's *such* a lot of 'em! I know of some poor people who were once very fond of me, and I could live with them and help them and keep myself. The difficulty is about Jeannot. I thought it all out before it came to this. I was well prepared, you see."

She smiled in a forlorn sort of way, with her upper lip drawn tight against her teeth, as if someone were pulling her back by the lobes of her ears.

"Oh, but, Trilby—what shall we do without you? Taffy and I, you know! You've become one of us!"

"Now, how good and kind of you to say that!" exclaimed poor Trilby, her eyes filling. "Why, that's just all I lived for, till all this happened. But it can't be any more now, can it? Everything is changed for me—the very sky seems different. Ah, Durien's little song—"*Plaisir d'amour—chagrin d'amour!*"—it's all quite true, isn't it? I shall start immediately and take Jeannot with me, I think."

"But where do you think of going?"

"Ah, I mayn't tell you that, Sandy dear—not for a long time! Think of all the trouble there'd be. Well, there's no time to be lost. I must take the bull by the horns."

She tried to laugh, and took him by his big side whiskers and kissed him on the eyes and mouth, and her tears fell on his face.

Then, feeling unable to speak, she nodded farewell and walked quickly up the narrow winding street. When she came to the first bend she turned round and waved her hand, and kissed it two or three times, and then disappeared.

The Laird stared for several minutes up the empty thoroughfare—wretched, full of sorrow and compassion. Then he filled himself another pipe and lit it, and hitched himself on to another post and sat there dangling his legs and kicking his heels and waited for the Bagots' cab to depart, that he might go up and face the righteous wrath of Taffy like a man and bear up against his bitter reproaches for cowardice and desertion before the foe.

¶

NEXT morning Taffy received two letters: one, a very long one, was from Mrs. Bagot. He read it twice over and was forced to acknowledge that it was a very good letter—the letter of a clever, warm-hearted woman, but a woman also whose son was to her as the very apple of her eye. One felt she was ready to flay her dearest friend alive in order to make Little Billee a pair of gloves out of the skin, if he wanted a pair; but one also felt she would be genuinely sorry for the friend. Taffy's own mother had been a little like that, and he missed her every day of his life.

Full justice was done by Mrs. Bagot to all Trilby's qualities of head and heart and person; but at the same time she pointed out, with all the cunning and ingeniously casuistic logic of her sex, when it takes to special pleading (even when it has right on its side), what the consequences of such a marriage must inevitably be in a few years—even sooner! The quick disenchantment, the lifelong regret, on both sides!

He could not have found a word to controvert her arguments, save perhaps in his own private belief that Trilby and Little Billee were both exceptional people; and how could he hope to know Little Billee's nature better than the boy's own mother!

And if he had been the boy's elder brother in blood, as he already was in heart and affection, would he, should he, could he have given his fraternal sanction to such a match?

Both as his friend and his brother he felt it was out of the question.

The other letter was from Trilby, in her bold, careless handwriting, that sprawled all over the page, and her occasionally imperfect spelling. It ran thus:—

"MY DEAR, DEAR TAFFY,—This is to say good-bye. I'm going away, to put an end to all this misery, for which nobody's to blame but myself.

"The very moment after I'd said *yes* to Little Billee I knew perfectly well what a stupid fool I was, and I've been ashamed of myself ever since. I had a miserable week, I can tell you.

"I am dreadfully unhappy, but not half so unhappy as if I married him and he were ever to regret it and be ashamed of me; and of course he would, really, even if he didn't show it—good and kind as he is—an angel

"Besides—of course I could never be a lady—how could I?—though I ought to have been one, I suppose. But everything seems to have gone wrong with me, though I never found it out before—and it can't be righted!

"Poor papa!

"I am going away with Jeannot. I've been neglecting him shamefully. I mean to make up for it all now.

"You mustn't try and find out where I am going; I know you won't if I beg you, nor anyone else. It would make everything so much harder for me.

"Angèle knows; she has promised me not to tell. I should like to have a line from you very much. If you send it to her she will send it on to me.

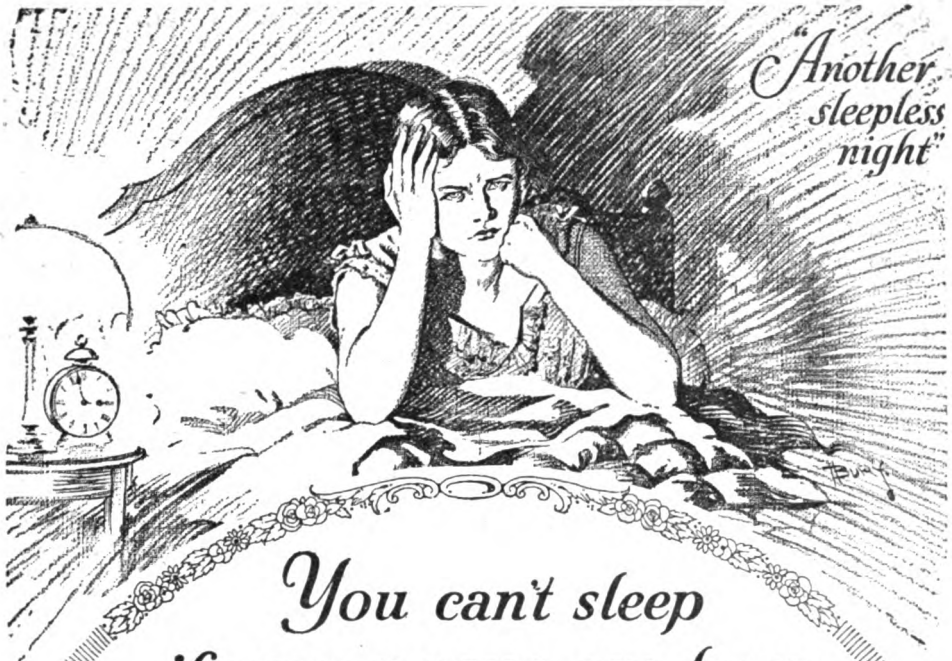
"Dear Taffy, next to Little Billee, I love you and the Laird better than anyone else in the whole world. I've never known real happiness till I met you. You have changed me into another person—you and Sandy and Little Billee.

"Oh, it *has* been a jolly time, though it didn't last long. It will have to do for me for life. So good-bye. I shall never, never forget; and remain, with dearest love, your ever faithful and most affectionate friend,

"TRILBY O'FERRALL.

"*P.S.*—When it has all blown over and settled again, if it ever does, I shall come back to Paris, perhaps, and see you again some day."

(*Continued on page 150*)



You can't sleep if your nerves are busy

HOW often does the worry and hustle of business so excite your nerves that sleep is out of the question? You go over the day's troubles again and again, and through miserable hours wait in suspense for the sleep that never comes.

Worn nerves are STARVED nerves—to ensure sound, natural sleep you must soothe and feed them.

They need "Ovaltine," the strength-giving food beverage that soothes, feeds and invigorates to a degree unequalled by any other food.

For "Ovaltine" is a preparation—highly concentrated and correctly balanced—of Nature's richest tonic foods—malt, milk and eggs.

For the next few nights take delicious "Ovaltine" just before you go to bed, and notice how quickly sleep comes to you. Notice how refreshed you feel in the morning—ready for the day's work with an alertness you have never experienced before.

The nerve and body-building qualities of "Ovaltine" are essential to adults, children and convalescents alike. No home can afford to be without it.

'OVALTINE'

TONIC FOOD BEVERAGE

P 428

Ensures Sound, Natural Sleep

Sold in tins at 1/6, 2/6 and 4/6.

It is economical to purchase the larger-sized tins.

The good Taffy pondered deeply over this letter—read it half-a-dozen times at least; and then he kissed it and put it back into its envelope and locked it up.

He knew what very deep anguish underlay this somewhat trivial expression of her sorrow.

He guessed how Trilby, so childishly impulsive and demonstrative in the ordinary intercourse of friendship, would be more reticent than most women in such a case as this.

He wrote to her warmly, affectionately, at great length, and sent the letter as she had told him.

The Laird also wrote a long letter full of tenderly worded friendship and sincere regard. Both expressed their hope and belief that they would soon see her again, when the first bitterness of her grief would be over, and that the old pleasant relations would be renewed.

And then, feeling wretched, they went and silently lunched together at the Café de l'Odéon, where the omelets were good and the wine wasn't blue.

Late that evening they sat together in the studio, reading. They found they could not talk to each other very readily without Little Billee to listen—three's company sometimes, and two's none!

Suddenly there was a tremendous getting up the dark stairs outside in a violent hurry, and Little Billee burst into the room like a small whirlwind—haggard, out of breath, almost speechless at first with excitement.

"Trilby—where is she? . . . what's become of her? . . . She's run away . . . oh! She's written me such a letter! . . . We were to have been married . . . at the Embassy . . . my mother . . . she's been meddling; and that cursed old ass . . . that beast . . . my uncle! . . . They've been here! I know all about it. . . . Why didn't you stick up for her? . . ."

"I did . . . as well as I could. Sandy couldn't stand it, and cut."

"*You* stuck up for her . . . *you*—why, you agreed with my mother that she oughtn't to marry me—you—you false friend—*you!* . . . Why, she's an angel—far too good for the likes of *me* . . . you know she is. As . . . as for her social position and all that, what degrading rot! Her father was as much a gentleman as mine . . . besides . . . what the devil do I care for her father? . . . it's *her* I want—*her*—*her*—*her*, I tell you . . . I can't *live* without her . . . I must have her *back*—I must have her *back* . . . do you *hear?* We were to have lived together at Barbizon . . . all our lives—and I was to have painted stunning pictures . . . like those other fellows there. Who cares for *their* social position, I should like to know . . . or that of their wives? *Damn* social position! . . . we've often said so—over and over again. An artist's life should be *away* from the world—above all that meanness and paltriness . . . all in his work. Social position, indeed! Over and over again we've said what fetid, bestial rot it all was—a thing to make one sick and shut one's self away from the world. . . . Why say one thing and act another? . . . Love comes before all—love levels all—love and art . . . and beauty—before such beauty as Trilby's, rank doesn't exist. Such rank as mine, too! Good God! I'll never paint another stroke till I've got her back . . . never, never, never, I tell you—I can't—I won't! . . ."

And so the poor boy went on, tearing and raving about in his rampage, knocking over chairs and easels, stammering and shrieking, mad with excitement.

They tried to reason with him, to make him listen, to point out that it was not her social position alone that unfitted her to be his wife and the mother of his children, etc.

It was no good. He grew more and more uncontrollable, became almost unintelligible, he stammered so—a pitiable sight and pitiable to hear.

"Oh, oh, good heavens! Are you so precious immaculate, you two, that you should throw stones at poor Trilby! What a shame, what a hideous shame it is that there should be one law for the woman and another for the man! . . . poor weak women—poor, soft, affectionate things that beasts of men are always running after and pestering and ruining and trampling under foot. . . . Oh, oh! It makes me sick—it makes me sick!" And finally he gasped and screamed and fell down in a fit on the floor.

The doctor was sent for; Taffy went in a cab to the Hôtel de Lille et d'Albion to fetch his mother; and poor Little Billee, quite unconscious, was undressed by Sandy and Madame Vinard and put into the Laird's bed.

The doctor came, and not long after, Mrs. Bagot and her daughter. It was a serious case. Another doctor was called in. Beds were got and made up in the studio for the two grief-stricken ladies, and thus closed the eve of what was to have been poor Little Billee's wedding-day, it seems.

Little Billee's attack appears to have been a kind of epileptic seizure. It ended in brain fever and other complications—a long and tedious illness. It was many weeks before he was out of danger, and his convalescence was long and tedious, too.

His nature seemed changed. He lay languid and listless—never even mentioned Trilby, except once to ask if she had come back, and if any one knew where she was, and if she had been written to.

She had not, it appears. Mrs. Bagot had thought it was better not, and Taffy and the Laird agreed with her.

Mrs. Bagot felt bitterly against the woman who had been the cause of all this trouble, and

(*Continued on page 152*)

Sailor's
corns
lifted right out

Are you a martyr to corns? Then read how this British Tar made an end of two five-years' offenders. He simply used Radox Bath Salts—a tablespoonful in a footbath.

"I had two corns on two small toes for this last five years. After using Radox Bath Salts a few times I was able to pull the corns right out, and so end many years of suffering; the heat of the steel decks making it absolutely unbearable to stand or walk. I have recommended Radox to all on board here, and it has practically become part of a fellow's kit."

11th April, 1927. *R.J.J., E.D.S., A.B., H.M.S., W.*

When you put your feet into a footbath containing Radox the salts soften the hard outer layers of the corn, and the oxygen which Radox liberates enters the pores and penetrates right to the root of the corn, which is thus loosened, so that it can be lifted out bodily. At all Chemists, 1/6 ½lb. 2/6 double size, in the Pink Packets.

Radox Bath Salts

1/6 *Half-pound Pink Packet.*

Give your Feet that "Kruschen Feeling."

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CHICKS' OWN
Every Tuesday, ***2d.***

bitterly against herself for her injustice. It was an unhappy time for everybody.

¶

THERE was more unhappiness still to come. One day in February Madame Angèle Boisse called on Taffy and the Laird in the temporary studio where they worked. She was in terrible tribulation.

Trilby's little brother had died of scarlet fever and was buried, and Trilby had left her hiding-place the day after the funeral and had never come back, and this was a week ago. She and Jeannot had been living at a village called Vibraye, in La Sarthe, lodging with some poor people she knew—she washing and working with her needle till her brother fell ill.

She had never left his bedside for a moment, night or day, and when he died her grief was so terrible that people thought she would go out of her mind; and the day after he was buried she was not to be found anywhere—she had disappeared, taking nothing with her, not even her clothes—simply vanished and left no sign, no message of any kind.

All the ponds had been searched—all the wells, and the small stream that flows through Vibraye—and the old forest.

Taffy went to Vibraye, cross-examined everybody he could, communicated with the Paris police, but with no result; and every afternoon, with a beating heart, he went to the Morgue. . . .

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy.")

Mr. Pickwick as Trespasser

CAPTAIN BOLDWIG was a little fierce man in a stiff black neckerchief and blue surtout, who, when he did condescend to walk about his property, did it in company with a thick rattan stick with a brass ferrule, and a gardener and a sub-gardener with meek faces, to whom (the gardeners, not the stick) Captain Boldwig gave orders with all due grandeur and ferocity; for Captain Boldwig's wife's sister had married a marquis, and the captain's house was a villa, and his land "grounds"; and it was all very high, and mighty, and great.

Mr. Pickwick had not been asleep half-an-hour, when little Captain Boldwig, followed by the two gardeners, came striding along as fast as his size and importance would let him; and, when he came near the oak tree, Captain Boldwig paused, and drew a long breath, and looked at the prospect, as if he thought the prospect ought to be highly gratified at having him to take notice of it; and then he struck the ground emphatically with his stick, and summoned the head-gardener.

"Hunt," said Captain Boldwig. "Yes, sir," said the gardener.

"Roll this place to-morrow morning. Do you hear, Hunt?" "Yes, sir."

"And take care that you keep me this place in good order. Do you hear, Hunt?" "Yes, sir."

"And remind me to have a board done about trespassers and spring-guns, and all that sort of thing, to keep the common people out. Do you hear, Hunt; do you hear?"

"I'll not forget, sir."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the other man, advancing, with his hand to his hat.

"Well, Wilkins, what's the matter with *you?*" said Captain Boldwig.

"I beg your pardon, sir; but I think there have been trespassers here, to-day."

"Ha!" said the captain, scowling around him.

"Yes, sir. They have been dining here, I think, sir."

"Why, damn their audacity! so they have," said Captain Boldwig, as the crumbs and fragments that were strewn about the grass met his eye. "They have been actually devouring their food here. I wish I had the vagabonds here!" said the captain, clinching the thick stick.

"I wish I had the vagabonds here!" said the captain, wrathfully.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Wilkins; "but——"

"But what? Eh?" roared the captain, and following the timid glance of Wilkins, his eyes encountered the wheelbarrow and Mr. Pickwick.

"Who are you, you rascal?" said the captain, administering several pokes to Mr. Pickwick's body with the thick stick. "What's your name?"

"Cold punch," murmured Mr. Pickwick as he sank to sleep again.

CHARLES DICKENS.

The ARGOSY
The WORLD'S BEST STORIES

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The Creeping Shadow

"It's got us! And if it gets the others—"

By HENRY HOLT

IF it hadn't been so pathetic they could have laughed as Billy Cranston climbed out of the surf boat up the river and came ashore with spotless buckskin shoes, a chin just shaved and a drill suit whose virgin whiteness was as yet unsullied by a single speck. It only lacked a row of chorus girls and an orchestra to strike up a matinée idol's opening song and they would have had the picture complete. Even to the limelight. You get all the limelight you want on the West Coast, from straight overhead, round about noon. It was shining down on his goldish hair—yes, it was tinted that way—as he looked about and took stock of the staff through his baby blue eyes for the first time.

There was Grease, the engineer—his other name was M'Vie—leaning up against the stump of a dead date palm, with one eye inclined to close. Rum never affected his legs nor his speech: only the left eye, which he closed when he wished to focus carefully. No, Grease wasn't looking at his best, but that was seven years after his mother kissed him good-bye at Kilmarnock and made him promise to keep out of drink shops in Africa. Drink shops! There wasn't a gin palace within a thousand miles of Grenobe. M'Vie's shirt sleeves were rolled up, his trousers were smeared just as he had come off a thirty-hour struggle with a broken engine, and at intervals he mopped a perspiring face with a piece of oily waste.

Near him stood Slade, described on the company's stationery in London as the resident manager, but he wasn't wearing his official nimbus just then. True he walked about in pyjamas all day and every day, but they were generally fairly clean.

Pills was pensively sucking a huge juicy kawa, slapping mosquitoes on his neck between whiles. That was in Pills' fourth year; he had another twelve months or so to go, if he lived through it, to earn his pension. The others—Tomlinson and Quest—were up in their respective bungalows with a touch of fever. Farrant, whom Billy Cranston had come out to relieve, was with one or two others, placed reverently near the edge of a low cliff, where their journeys had ended.

There was just one twitch of Cranston's lip as the sight of it all sank in, and then he turned round to the most amazing sight of the lot. Half angel and half wax doll. That, at least, was the first impression she gave. Billy Cranston had brought a white woman with him to the West Coast!

He lifted her out of the surf boat, and holding on to her arm protectingly, advanced upon Pills.

"What's happened?" Something was going on in his throat, visible just over the top of his immaculate white collar.

Pills dropped the kawa. The juice splashed his bare ankle. He fumbled at his pith helmet.

"Happened?" Pills didn't see his point of view clearly for a moment.

"It's all right, dear," Cranston said, turning to the doll-angel. "Something's gone wrong, I expect."

"You're Mr. Cranston? My name is Slade." There was a curious rasp in the resident manager's voice.

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Cranston, extending a hand. "This is my wife."

Slade went toward the woman with a puzzled frown.

"How do you do?" she managed, with a smile that was nine-tenths sheer grit. "Please put your helmet on. This heat is awful. How far is it to the settlement?"

"This *is* the settlement," said Slade, glancing at the tin-roofed power-house and the four scattered bungalows half hidden in the palm trees.

"This the—the *settlement!*" A pause. "But I don't quite understand. Is this where—where we are to live?"

Slade had a deep growl of a voice that was never fashioned for a drawing-room.

"We?" he rumbled like distant thunder, turning to Cranston. "But surely your wife is going on by this steamer?"

"When does the next boat call?" parried the new man.

"It comes once every ten weeks—about," Slade told him bluntly. "You've made some mistake. It's impossible for a white woman to live here. For twenty reasons. The climate, the conditions, the—why," his glance went to the medical officer, "Pills, you explain, will you?"

"I'll try, Mrs. Cranston, but it isn't easy to make such a thing clear in a few moments. This isn't even a white man's country, let alone a place for a white woman. It's primitive—unbelievably primitive and raw. We stick it but not because we like it. There isn't anything *to* like. The only thing that preserves our sanity—and I mean this—is work. Then there's the heat. It's all right now if you can stand this sort of thing; but in another month or so when it gets really hot—well, I can't describe it to you. One doesn't want to live through it, very much. My chief job is to keep an eye open for leprosy among the niggers. Fortunately we don't get many cases, but it's one of the reasons why Slade says you couldn't stay. We have to keep fever down all the time with quinine. There are some diseases we can cope with, others we know little or nothing about. Worst of all, though, is something you can't understand, something you couldn't be expected to understand."

His eyes left hers for a moment and turned inland to the country which always awaits her time, then irresistibly sweeps aside any effort to change her.

"There are six of us here representing the company, Mrs. Cranston," he went on. "We're here on sufferance, and Africa never allows us to forget that, day or night. On the company's books it looks like a pretty large strip of territory that we have in our hands. Actually it isn't much bigger than a pin prick on the side of the West Coast. We're paying human lives one by one while clawing to keep it from slipping away from us. And Africa will get us, every one of us, if we stay long enough. She's laughing up her sleeve all the time and waiting. She always waits—and always wins."

"You make it sound very horrible," said Lola Cranston slowly, "but my husband has to put in two years here to qualify for his job at the head office in London. We were married three weeks before sailing. He didn't want me to come, but I persuaded him. Now that I'm here you don't seriously suggest that I should go back to England and wait until his two years are up, do you?"

Pills bit his lip. On the West Coast he had got out of the way of trying to make women see reason; and this one was manifestly in love.

"You don't seem to understand what you are facing, Mrs. Cranston," boomed Slade. "It isn't only that we haven't got theatres and shops and the ordinary distractions of life. We've got *nothing*. A gramophone with fifteen records still unbroken; and three of those are cracked. That's everything, apart from the pleasure of one another's society. And there come days—most days in fact—when we hate the very sight of one another."

But Slade overlooked the factor that the woman was still in love.

"I don't want to be anywhere where my husband is not." She said it quietly as though they should have accepted the statement unquestioningly. M'Vie moved away from the date palm with a perplexed expression, then returned to his original position there. Engines he did know a little about, but they worked according to certain fixed laws, whereas this didn't make sense.

"Lola, dear," Cranston put in, "we went into this question a good many times weeks ago. Then, finally, against my own conviction, I agreed to bring you here. I haven't said much about it since then, but

I've been very uneasy on the subject. I knew it was bad, I warned you over and over again that it was no place for a white woman, but frankly I had no idea it was as ghastly as this. Listen, Lola. These fellows have no reason for painting the thing blacker than it is. They know. I can't go back on my promise, but won't you believe them ? "

It wasn't defiance exactly with which the angel-doll looked at her six-foot husband. Excepting on this point they had never yet had two opinions that didn't coincide.

" I do believe them, Billy. But I shall stay."

Slade's hard rugged face was oddly set. If people deliberately chose a foolish course that was their own affair, he was reflecting, but for one thing he knew that even now she didn't understand.

" There's no romance on earth could survive two years here, Mrs. Cranston," he told her. And then she smiled at him. It was too funny. What in the name of Eros did *he* know about romance ? Really, these men all seemed to think love was purely a matter of environment. And by what right did they seek to govern her affairs, anyway ?

" And I'm longing to see our bungalow," she said with an unmistakable air of finality.

¶

" MY God ! It's hell with the lid on ! " Billy Cranston muttered this chiefly to himself as he staggered into the bungalow, pitched his helmet on the table and collapsed into a chair. There was not much of the matinée idol about him now. The West Coast was taking her toll of Lola's husband more swiftly than from most. Partly that was his own fault. One must take work with slow sure steps there, whereas he had taken it at a gallop. Before he left London there had been some sort of understanding that the length of his stay in Africa might be determined to some extent by his capacity for learning. Some men picked up the necessary knowledge in less than two years. Billy had thrown himself into the work with a zeal which had at first made the others speak scoffingly of a " new broom," but in which Slade presently read desperation.

Lola lay back quite still in her chair. Was it only seven months that she had endured this sort of thing ? Why couldn't Billy come in without the same remark or its blood brother every time ? It made the almost unendurable heat seem worse. For that reason she dreaded the sound of his lagging footsteps on the veranda. When her nerves first began to get on edge it made her want to scream as she listened for him, knowing in advance what he was going to say as he blundered in, clothes sticking to him as if he'd just walked out of a river. She had that sort of thing more under control now, though. She didn't want to scream when Billy reminded her of the heat from which there was no escape in these primitive conditions ; but it was just one more dagger in the heart of romance. Romance ! Lola would have laughed at the word, but she couldn't afford the luxury of any such emotion.

The buzz of a sand fly. She opened her eyes ; watched the insect warily as it dallied about the room. More than once the torment of a sand fly's sting had kept her without sleep for two or three nights.

" That damned engine's broken down again." This and a weary sigh from Billy.

Lola's lids fluttered and for a second the knuckle of her right hand resting on the chair arm gleamed white. But she didn't speak. Perhaps her nerves were a bit groggy, especially after that last attack of malaria, but need Billy come back to that wretched hovel of theirs and shed all his woes upon her ? She didn't know anything about engines : she didn't want to know anything about them. Engines were essentially affairs for men, and she had her own troubles. Yes, God knew how she'd suffered as, one by one, her cherished illusions had been torn from her, here in this desolation. She had liked Billy first of all because he danced divinely. Then she discovered that his baby blue eyes, which had a fascination all their own, were not the measure of his character. He could be very firm, and very strong. Lola loved strength in a man. For instance, in their early days when that Putnam girl set her cap at him, he had a battle with himself as well as with her. The Putnam girl wasn't used to biting the dust in such encounters, and she certainly did want Billy for keeps.

Lola watched it all, watched Billy win, and watched always afterward the steady loyalty of him. She fell in love with him by easy, comfortable stages, and the more she knew of him the more she seemed to think he had not a single fundamental fault. And it *was* love. Yes, there could be no doubt about that. To her he was a king among men. His ideals were hers. That they

might spend their lives apart had seemed unthinkable. The mere suggestion that he might leave her for two years, that he was to spend two of the best years of his life alone in Africa while she remained at home eating her heart out, had filled her with something akin to awe. He was a part of her. Why, then, should he go without her? Hardships? A rough life? With his love and tenderness she could endure anything.

But that was in London, where his devotion to her was a thing of infinite beauty, a thousand leagues from Africa, this remorseless land of sand and flies and heat which, like the mills of God, ground slowly but ground exceedingly small, and went on grinding endlessly, tearing away the manhood, even reason itself, from men. Yes, that was all in London, and this was . . . ! A little shiver passed through her frame.

"Didn't I see Pills hanging around here to-day?" His voice was tinged with irritation.

"Hanging around?" Too much was conveyed by those words for her entire peace of mind.

"That's exactly what I said."

Lola bit her lip hard before replying.

"Dr. Spencer was here talking to me for some time this afternoon. Why?"

"Holy suffering cats! Lola; you don't mean that? You heard what I said. You—you know perfectly well what I mean." His eyes were blazing now. Part of that was due to fever, but not all. Not nearly all. And when she still lay there without making an indignant protest his fist clenched.

"Lola, you threatened you'd go back to England by the last boat. I wanted you to: I never asked you to come to this filthy hole anyway. But ten days ago when you said you were going, it wasn't wifely obedience or anything of that sort. It was just a plain threat. What you intended to do—afterward—I don't know, but I think you meant to leave me. I'd rather you had gone, even so, than stayed in this accursed spot that'll get you if you stay. Pills was right in what he told us when we first landed. It'll get us all in time if we don't go, you first of all because you're a woman. Listen, Lola." His voice was lower. He dreaded her answer—if she would answer. "Why didn't you go?"

"I didn't go because—" her words trailed into silence. It wasn't easy for her to lie to Billy. And it wasn't easy—in fact she couldn't tell him the truth. She didn't even clearly know the truth herself. She pictured Billy as she had once known him, then as what he had become. Primitive, raw, just like everything else in this forsaken place. At first he used to apologise after outbursts of savagery, then he didn't even seem to see that it was savagery. He was drinking, too, at times, like the others, even like the Scottish engineer who always sheered away from her as if he had the plague.

There was Jim Spencer. Her knowledge of that began curiously, when her heart was breaking because of Billy, and there was nothing—literally nothing—else for her to do but shelter from that intolerable heat and count the days until she could get back to civilisation. Jim was human with her, he was kind. First it only seemed that he was a heaven-sent relief from the awful monotony and emptiness of things: and then by degrees she put him more and more into the foreground of her existence. He was playing a man's part in a man's world. He even made excuses for Billy; a hundred excuses, which made Jim loom bigger in her eyes. And then, three days before the steamer arrived, there came a night when Jim told her what it would mean for him after she had gone, told her that when she arrived there he had begun to drift like the others, told her that it was she and only she who had helped him to keep a grip upon himself. She appeared to be on the brink of some new wonderful adventure, so that when the steamer called she let it sail away without her. There was always the next boat.

"*Why didn't you go?*" Billy's voice bit harshly into her thoughts.

"Because it seemed so dreadfully final," she told him.

He stared at her for a while.

"Even so, will you go back by the next boat? It will be here in nine weeks."

That would be the end of October. Jim Spencer was to sail at Christmas.

"I needn't decide this minute, need I, Billy?"

"I suppose not." He sank back, mopping his forehead. "God, what a climate!"

Lola picked up a magazine that had come by the last mail. Desultorily she dipped into its pages.

"A queer thing happened to me this morning," she heard presently. "Out there in that sunlit hell. I was standing still when suddenly everything went black. Just

as if someone had switched the light out. It only lasted a few moments, and then I could see again as well as ever. That eternal glare, I expect."

"Billy!" There was a new note in the girl's voice. She was out of her chair now, coming toward him. "Billy, you're frightening me!"

"No need to get scared," he answered.

"But, Billy, the same thing happened to Jim Spencer."

"Damn Jim Spencer! Understand, Lola, once and for all, I'm your husband still and you can't expect me to——"

"Hush, dear." In that instant she was a woman apart from her environment. "Has this only happened to you once?"

"Oh, it's nothing. Don't get excited about it."

"But you don't know, Billy. You're not a doctor, and Pills is. This—this might—might be the beginning of something dreadful." She was peering into his eyes which were blue and clear as ever. Her own cheeks had gone oddly white.

"How do you mean, dreadful?"

"It happened to Pills twice. Once yesterday and once to-day. Only, the second time it lasted longer. He wasn't bothered about it. Like you, he thought it might only be the effect of the glare, but he was telling me there is a—a form of blindness that attacks white men here on the West Coast and begins something like that. It's very rare, and they believe it is some form of malaria, caused by the bite of one particular kind of mosquito that attacks the optic nerve after sun glare has weakened it."

Billy regarded her in silence for a space.

"Pish!" he declared languidly. "You'll be trying to convince me next that I'm going blind. You're getting hysterical, woman."

"Billy, all the same, just to please me, will you see Jim Spencer about it?"

He got to his feet and stood there swaying slightly for a moment.

"If you mention Jim Spencer's name to me again," he said thickly, "I'll—I'll smash something!"

There came a heavy tread on the veranda. The netting was drawn aside and Slade entered.

"Have you any idea where Pills is, Cranston?" asked the resident manager.

Billy checked his first instinctive retort, taking a fresh grip on himself.

"Yes, he's gone up to one of the nigger sheds. Busy with a case of snake bite."

"See if you can hunt him up, will you, there's a good fellow?" urged Slade. "We've got to get that engine working again, and Grease declares something's gone wrong with his eyes. Sight seems to fade away occasionally."

The girl and her husband stood curiously motionless; Lola's limbs began to tremble.

"Something gone wrong with M'Vie's eyes?" came from Billy dully.

"Oh, it's nothing. Nerves, I expect, or a touch of the sun," declared Slade impatiently.

"Mr. Slade," Lola's voice cut like a knife through the room, "if you absolutely *had* to get the boat here earlier than when she's due nine weeks from now, is there any way, any conceivable way of doing it?"

"Of getting the boat here earlier? Don't talk nonsense, Mrs. Cranston! You know there's no way of getting any message out of this place."

Lola stared at the resident manager, through him, and beyond, to a nameless terror; then as it robbed her of all power, sank into a heap on the floor.

"I knew that fool woman would get the jerks if she stayed!" muttered Slade, turning on his heel. "Cranston was an ass to bring her here at all."

Presently Lola stirred. She looked up at her husband. He was standing in the same place, but now he was rubbing his eyes.

"Billy," his wife said tremulously, "what are you doing? What's wrong, dear?"

"The light's gone again, Lola. But it—it seems to have gone for good this time! I can't make it out."

From some hidden fount strength came back to her limbs. An instant later she was close to him, her arms about his neck.

"Billy, my dearest," came from her chokingly, "I'm here, *here* right with you. Can't—can't you——"

His blue eyes were wide open but sightlessly vacant. For a second his lip twitched as it had twitched that first day when he found the desolation into which Lola had plunged with him. He shook his head slowly.

"Everything's gone," he told her. "At first I thought it would all come back as it did before, but it's—it's still dark. Just as dark as though I'd never had any eyes. Lola," he drew her to him gently, his cheek

against hers, warm and comforting, " I'll be able to see you again in a minute or two, so it's all right. Nothing to worry about really, is there ? "

" No, nothing, Billy." This with grim determination to carry conviction.

He smoothed his cheek against hers.

" No, nothing, really, I suppose," he said. Then, after a pause, " Don't move away till —till it's all right again, dear. It kind of gives me assurance to be touching you. Lola, it's queer, but somehow you seem different. I can't see your eyes but I know just exactly how they're looking. I can tell that by your voice, even by the feel of you. It's almost as if—as if there'd been a miracle and we'd slipped back months, years, an eternity, to the time when there wasn't such a place as the West Coast for us." He kissed her hair and stroked it absently with one hand. " You're a marvel, my sweet. Of course you know this blindness is only going to last a few moments, but some girls would have been scared, so far away from anywhere."

With a supreme effort Lola steadied her shaking hands, but her teeth were chattering. He mustn't know that. He mustn't suspect that at any cost.

" There's nothing to *be* afraid of, Billy."

" But some girls—" he began, then halted. " You see, there's Pills and the engineer, both begun to go the same way. And if "—he pushed her from him—" if this damned thing has got three of us—my God, Lola, think of it ! Six white men only ! It's not coming back, I tell you. It's *got* us ! And if it gets the others ! Oh ! " His voice rose to a scream. He lurched across the room, stumbled over a chair and fell. For a space he lay very still ; so still that the girl thought he had injured himself. She was horribly frightened. Coherent thought had almost left her, but she crept to her man, and put her hand on his shoulder.

" Billy ! " It was little more than a whisper.

He stirred.

" Lola, listen." The words came jerkily. " I — I — think — I'm — going — mad. Go away from me. I want to be alone. The river's the place for me. That's the only thing left."

The girl's lips were moving. Up to the God whom she had forgotten there in Africa went a jumbled prayer for strength.

" You mustn't talk that way, Billy," she faltered. It'll be all right. Even if your sight doesn't come back just now it will come. This can be cured. Pills told me so, definitely. There's a recognised treatment in the hospitals down the coast. After a few months the optic nerve always goes back to normal and——"

" After a few months ! " He was quieter. His hands sought those of Lola : he clung to them like a child. " But if the others go the same way ! And there's you ! How do we know the same thing won't happen to you ? The steamer won't be here for another nine weeks. Lola, think—six white men and one woman ! Back there, Africa is teeming with niggers who are waiting always, like the country itself, for their chance. While we can see them, *watch* them, we have an idea where we stand. But if we can't see them, Lola ? What if we can't see them ? And there's you ! "

" It's different with me, Billy," she said soothingly. " I haven't been out in the sun so much as the others. There isn't the same danger of that in my case."

Billy's hand passed over his eyes, but neither he nor she spoke for a while. Then :

" Lola, I want to tell you something. Kiss me first, will you ? That's better. Dear, if I hadn't had you here with me I believe I should have turned yellow. Maybe you can realise it's a bit unnerving just while it lasts, taking everything into consideration. And you're only a slip of a girl. What did we come to this hell-hole for, anyway ? Lola, I can't—can't see yet."

She led him to a chair in which he lay back, holding tightly to her hand.

" Keep close for a little while, will you, my sweet ? " he begged. " Till I get more used to it all."

She sat on the edge of his chair, striving to pierce a little way into the future. But there was no picture of the to-morrows that she dared to conjure up.

Across the compound M'Vie was standing with a bottle of whisky in his hand, uneasily regarding the broken-down machinery. From time to time he rubbed oily knuckles into his eyes. They had been playing him tricks. So had the engine, he reflected. The whole show was driving him crazy. For a time, while his sight had gone, he was scared. Couldn't even find the whisky. But he'd got it now, and he could see again.

He turned out of the power-house into the blazing sun. Engines had ceased to interest him for the moment. He had that other thing to worry about now. He

clutched the bottle. It would help in case—in case everything went black again. Meanwhile he wanted to get away from the darned place. The further the better. There'd be hell to pay when Slade found he hadn't repaired that engine, but who could mend an engine in the dark?

He stalked on, turning from the beaten track. They mustn't find him yet, until he'd got over that shock. It was daft to ask a man to repair a cylinder head when he couldn't see it half the——

M'Vie stopped, put his hand out before him gropingly. A wordless cry came from the back of his throat. One hand went to his forehead, then he screamed. There would be no going back now, unless this curtain of blackness lifted. And nobody could hear him. He had come a mile, perhaps two, off the beaten track. Panic seized him. He began to run. Africa, with patience as old as the hills, waited. He was facing the interior.

¶

BILLY CRANSTON sat with his head a little on one side, listening.

"Lola!"

"Yes, Billy." She came toward him and stroked his forehead.

"What day is it, dear?"

"Tuesday."

His big hands closed over hers and he crushed it playfully.

"I've asked you that question several times this morning, dearest, haven't I?"

"That's all right, Billy. I quite understand."

"Do you believe the boat will come to-morrow, Lola?"

"It ought to, dear. Mr. Slade thinks it will, anyway."

Billy ran his fingers through his hair.

"It's been a long time. The thing is bound to come eventually, of course, but I'm haunted by the fear that it might be delayed. And I don't think I could stand much more of this."

"Be patient a little longer, Billy. You've been splendid."

Billy sat upright.

"But I wasn't thinking of myself, dear. It's *you*. You've—good Lord, Lola, sometimes when I sit and wonder what would have happened to us all if you hadn't been here, it makes me shiver. We've been dependent on you, every one of us."

"You'd have worried through somehow," she told him.

Billy shook his head.

"Don't make any mistake, Lola. I've talked to the others, and a man doesn't lie about such things when he's gone blind while stuck in a plague spot such as this on the West Coast. I don't know about Slade. He's different from anyone I ever met. He's solid white, through and through. He swore for ten whole minutes when this first got him, but if you remember that wasn't personal, as you might say. He was cussing because he realised the blessed Company would have a slump in dividends. But the others—well, they're just human. They admit they went all to pieces, the same as I did, when they first went blind. Quest told me frankly he hunted everywhere for his revolver so that he could put a bullet in his own brain. He was nearly off his head when you tackled him, dear."

Billy laughed. "It's *funny*, when you come to think of it. You, about as big as a bee's knee, and never been much more than a couple of feet over your mother's garden fence before, come out here to the place Satan uses for an ash dump, find hell breaking loose, and then get the whole crowd eating out of your hand! Not that we're fit to eat out of your hand, dear. No, not one of us, unless it's Slade. He's a prince. He's a real man, Lola. He's the only one who's stood up even decently well when it came to the real test. As for myself, I'll never believe you can really forgive me——"

"Stop, Billy. I can't bear you to say that, dearest. I *understand*, my husband. There isn't anything to forgive. I have told you that a hundred times, and it's true. There is some strain under which every man will break."

Again Billy's head slowly went from side to side.

"But I broke, Lola. And yet you haven't broken during all these weeks when you had us on your hands sightless, when you've had nobody at all but a coloured house-boy to look after you. Listen to 'em now, Lola. There's Pills and Tomlinson singing at the top of their voices in their bungalow. Cheerful as a couple of kids at a party. That's your work, Lola. That's the sort of thing you've done to 'em all. They're contented. Maybe in between whiles they get their tails down a bit, but they hide it. Gosh, yes! they hide it all right. One

never hears a whine out of anybody." He started chuckling again. "They're scared to grumble when you're around, I believe, Lola. You sailed into Quest like a sergeant-major a week ago when he started cussing his rotten luck. The humour of it set him off laughing and he's been like a lamb with the fear of mint sauce in him ever since. And yet he'd love to kiss the very ground you trod on, like the rest of us. You're a living miracle, Lola. How you've managed it I don't understand. I believe even Slade got funky when you sprained your ankle—you, with the only pair of eyes doing business among the lot of us. How's the foot getting on now, dear?"

"Not well yet, but it's coming on all right."

"I wonder." He pressed his lips to hers. "Don't forget that I've got ears even though I can't see. I believe you're keeping it from getting well by not resting it all this time."

"It doesn't hurt, truly, Billy," she assured him.

Billy's fingers were drumming on the edge of his chair. He was silent for a while.

"I lie awake sometimes," he said at last in a low voice, "guessing just what was the end of M'Vie." Momentarily his jaws set. "It's—it's a thing one can't help wondering about sometimes, knowing exactly how he must have felt."

"Billy," she said severely, "do you want me to sail into you as I sailed into Mr. Quest a week ago?"

The man's expression relaxed. The grimness went out of it and the old patient smile came back. But his hold on Lola tightened.

"My sweet," he said in a voice that was not steady, "isn't life a wonderful thing?"

"Wonderful, Billy?" Her fingers were toying with his hair.

"You heard me the first time, darling little hypocrite. Now, if you were really in love with me——"

"Don't say that, Billy, even in jest."

"Gosh, what a lumbering elephant I am! And you know I'd rather kick myself from here to Putney than say a single word to hurt you. Honey bird, if that wasn't love when we first married, what was it?"

"I think it was love, dear. Hot, young love. I won't let you say a word against those days, Billy."

His arms were tight and strong as steel chains about her.

"But it was nothing—a poor groping fool to this, Lola! Why, blind though I am, and in just about as bad a fix as mortal man could get into on this earth, inside me I'm happier with you here and now than I ever was in those days."

"And the blindness isn't for long, Billy. Remember Pills swears it will pass off when it's treated. Think of all our glorious to-morrows. Remember, too, Mr. Slade says that when you and I leave here you won't have to come back. He's going to arrange about your job at the head office."

"Yes, yes," he repeated pensively. "Lola, there's something infectious about the spirit of that chap Slade. If there didn't happen to be a couple of men coming out by this steamer I almost believe he'd have wanted to stay behind, while the rest of us go down the coast into hospital, and try to keep the place going by himself. I wonder how those two new fellows who are coming will manage to——"

A deep voice boomed across the compound, at once a clarion call and a triumphant bellow: Slade trumpeting like a bull elephant.

"Billy! Billy my darling! You hear? The boat has come at last. Dear God, do you hear that? And a day before its time!"

She tore herself away, stumbled across the floor, slashed the netting aside and hurried across the compound. Her heart was pounding suffocatingly when she reached the resident manager's side.

"Is it true, Mr. Slade?" she begged chokingly. "You're sure—you're *sure?*"

Slade put his arms out until he touched her. Then he held her. There was a queer catch in his voice when next he spoke.

"Yes, you little saint from heaven. It's true."

"How soon will the surf boat be here?"

"It's here now, right under your eyes," said Slade. "And you'd see it if you weren't as blind as the rest of us. Oh, I've known it for weeks, ever since you bumped into me after taking to using a walking-stick when you pretended you'd hurt your ankle. But you've been glorious, Mrs. Cranston."

She clutched at his arm.

"You—you didn't tell anyone, did you?"

"Me? *Tell* anyone? Why, it was just about the finest secret in the world, and the bare knowledge of it kept me steady when I could have gone crazy. Here's Billy coming. You'd better go and tell him now, though."

The Tragedy of a Night

"Love is life's reward."

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

A MAN, stripped to the shirt, bruised and disfigured in many places with blood and dirt, lay prostrate upon a sandy hillock, his bloodshot eyes turned steadily westwards. He was in dire straits—starving, half mad with thirst, and exhausted with fruitless fighting. For every barrel of his empty, still smoking revolver, a dead or dying man lay upon the little plateau around him. He had fought as a man fights who sees his own life forfeited by reason of overmastering odds, yet girds himself to meet death as becomes one of a great race and a great country. The number of his assailants had been such as had made fighting a pantomime, and his desperate resistance a farce, as far as any chance of escape was concerned. A hundred savage soldiery, whose language was a mystery to him, and whose arms and whole appearance a revelation, had come upon him in his sleep a short hour ago. Away over the stony steppes and across the mountains his false guides were flying in mortal terror of their lives.

For this was an unknown country of horrors, at whose portals whole generations of explorers had perished, whose great city was still the home of mystery, the despair and the desire of travellers of all nations. Alone on the face of the earth the people had resisted the march of civilization, had held firm and unshaken the great barriers which Nature and their own savagery had reared about the sacred capital. Yonder it lay in the cold grey light across the plain, its great walls, monuments of marvellous masonry, encompassing it like an iron band, behind a heterogeneous multitude of minarets and strange square columns, flat-roofed houses, and curious watch towers. Even in those moments of his agony the man forgot his sufferings and his approaching doom in the mingled exultation and despair of the explorer. He, first of all Englishmen, first indeed of all Europeans, was looking, though from afar off and in grievous plight, upon the sacred city of Thibet. Even though he paid for his daring with his life, as seemed indeed certain, this was at least some measure of consolation. Yet it was consolation fraught with dismay and anger.

To die so near the goal was maddening. A fit of ineffective rage seized him. Who were these wretched, half-starved savages to stand between him and the desire of his life? He measured them against himself, and the thought of their brute power over him made him almost hysterical in those first hours of his pain. He was a man of note in his country, rich, noble, young. If only he could make them understand. He cursed the grim barrier of non-comprehension which his little knowledge of Asiatic and their hideous dialect had reared between them. All his signs they had treated with contempt. He had pointed towards the city and had shown them papers—papers to which many seals had been affixed, and which proved him to be an Englishman of note, entitled to the respect and consideration of all foreign powers. He had pointed backwards across the hills whence he had come, a long and wearisome journey, which from days had grown into weeks, and from weeks to months. Nothing had availed him. He had no presents with which to bribe them. Such few pieces of gold which he had possessed had been snatched from him by the first comers, their yellow Mongolian faces and narrow eyes on fire with cupidity.

They had stripped him of his few possessions, with a ruthlessness peculiar to their race, and afterwards they had set upon him to destroy him. He had a horrible fear that even now they were hesitating to kill him only because, furious at his stout resistance, they were planning a more terrible thing. He had heard many stories of the tortures which these people inflicted upon chance travellers, drawn towards their city as a moth to the candle by its

solemn and impenetrable mystery. He recalled them now with sickening distinctiveness. What they had done to others they would surely do to him. And presently it appeared that he was right. A dozen of them came, dragging a pine trunk stripped of its branches up the side of a wooded ravine a hundred yards away. Others began to drill a hole in the rising ground close to where he lay. Backwards and forwards they passed, casting every now and then upon him glances of fierce and sickly hatred, shouting menaces at him in a heathen gibberish, throwing every now and then a stone at his uncovered head. The man realized then, more fully perhaps than ever before, the hideous, unconquerable hate of this people for all aliens, under which heading he, the European, most surely came. It was written in their sallow faces, it flashed in their black, narrow-slit eyes, their gestures, and the vindictive torrent of abuse which flowed from their lips, proclaimed it. Their dead comrades they kicked aside with indifference. It was no desire to avenge them which had kindled their rage, which had made death too slight a punishment to be meted out to him, which had put torture into their minds—for it was going to be torture. The man saw it in their faces, read it in every grin and leer which chilled his blood. He groaned aloud. It was an evil end for him, Geoffrey Felbrigge, Earl of Lechfort, Lord Lieutenant of his county and Master of Hounds.

An hour afterwards they left him. He was trussed and tied to the post which they had improvised, his hands and legs aching with the cords which cut into his flesh, his face turned with relentless irony to the city of his desires. They had trooped away, whither exactly he could not tell, with strange mocking cries, and with flourishing gestures which seemed like an invocation to the elements to rain their tortures upon him. He was alone, with no one save his thoughts to bear him company—a strange, lone figure in the rocky solitude.

A fierce sun beat upon him all day. For ten hours he had neither eaten nor drunk, and the roof of his mouth was like blistered leather. His eyes were bloodshot and his tongue swollen. He had tugged at his cords until his arms were bruised, and the blood had forced its way through his tightened skin. Then a partial but merciless unconsciousness came to him. The sandy desert faded away before his eyes, the sun-gleaming minarets of the city mocked him no longer, the fierce heat ceased to torture his numbed flesh. He was back in London, back in the long drawing-room, with its delicate perfumes and gently softened shade, face to face with the woman whose invincible pride joined to his own stubbornness had driven him forth a reckless wanderer, had kindled in him the old, wild spirit—the passion for new countries, which, before he had met her, had been the joy of his life. Tall and fair and slim, in her white evening gown, he could see her standing before him with eyes which bade him stay, which said things to him which her tongue had been too proud to utter. He could see the jewel which flashed upon her heaving bosom, the tears which welled slowly into her eyes. It was his fault, his fault. The thought of her—his wife—the woman, and the only woman he had ever loved, soothed him for one moment only to madden him the next. She would be waiting for him, and he would never return. He would never be able to take her hands, to look into her eyes, to smooth her hair and kiss away those tears, as he had longed to many a time since he had left London in a sudden fit of blind, unreasoning fury. She had been right. He had been brutal and unreasonable. After all, the difference between them had been so pitifully trivial. He was a brave man, and he had looked death in the face before, death as hideous as this if quicker. Yet he broke down now. It was the thought of Helen, not to see her—to let her know . . .

Then sun went down, and the cooler air was rent with the sound of a man's sobs.

¶

IN another hemisphere, London was doing its best to amuse itself. Westwards the pavements were thronged with saunterers, the streets were blocked with taxi-cabs, the night was warm, and the women's dresses were like the wings of summer butterflies. The playhouses were flaring with light, everywhere there was colour and movement and languorous content. Further westwards, from the great dwelling-houses and the mansions of the squares, drugget crossed the pavement, there was the murmur of floating music and

soft voices from the holland-shrouded balconies above. The whole city seemed steeped in pleasure this soft spring evening. Every one was entertaining or being entertained.

On the balcony of one of the great mansions in Cadogan Square a woman was standing alone. She had escaped for a moment unseen from the brilliantly-lit ballroom behind; her face was turned eastwards, and her eyes were soft with unshed tears. It was a moment rendered necessary by a sudden rush of memories which had brought a lump into her throat and a strange sadness into her heart. The last time she had been a guest in this house he had been her companion. She remembered distinctly how he had arranged her cloak in the carriage, had thrown away his freshly-lit cigarette because she had coughed, had been, as it chanced, upon that evening more than ordinarily attentive to her in such little ways as woman sets store by. She remembered too, how he had seemed to her that night, in comparison with the other men who had thronged the rooms, more than ordinarily handsome; he had danced with her three times, and out here on the balcony he had leant over her with a little laugh, and had kissed her—his own wife. Oh, how mad, how foolish she had been to let him go, when a single word from her would have stopped him. Never a day had passed but she had repented the stupid, stubborn pride which had kept sealed her lips. Where was he now? Lost to her, perhaps, for ever. She gazed wistfully and tearfully eastwards. Many thousand miles away, a man was being tortured, and he too was thinking of that night.

"At last I have found you then, Helen. Do you know that I have been looking for you everywhere?"

She turned round slowly and unwillingly. A tall, soldierly man was standing by her side, a man who looked at her as a man looks only at the woman he loves. She saw and shrank from it, as she had done many a time before. She wanted no man's love save his who was gone.

"I came out for a breath of fresh air, Morton," she answered, "The rooms here are always too hot, I think that they must be badly ventilated. I was just going in. Will you give me your arm?"

"I wonder," he said, "would you do me a favour, Helen. I want to talk to you for five minutes before you meet with any of your friends inside. May I?"

She moved her head gravely, but her manner explained a certain unwillingness.

"If it is necessary," she answered, "I am quite ready to listen to you."

He drew a short breath and hesitated. So much depended upon the next few minutes. There were grey hairs in his head, he was approaching middle age, and all his life he had loved but one woman. For a time she had been lost to him. This was his chance of winning her again. It was for life or death. No wonder that he hesitated.

"Helen," he said at last, "there is some news which I wish you to hear first from me. The evidence of poor Geoffrey's death has been accepted unanimously and without question by the court. I believe that since mid-day I have had the right to call myself the Earl of Lechfort."

Once more she turned eastwards. Her cheeks were very pale, but her eyes were dry. She spoke distinctly enough, though her tone was hard and emotionless.

"I thought," she said, "that it would take a week for them to give a decision."

"The evidence," he answered, gently, "was too conclusive to leave room for a shadow of doubt. No one regrets poor Geoffrey's death more than I do, Helen; but as to doubting it—it is impossible."

"Very well, Morton," she said, "I do not complain. You must let me know about your other arrangements, and I will move into the Dower House, at Huncote, whenever you please. That, however, must not imply that I consider myself a widow."

He interrupted her—a frown upon his forehead, a note of passion in his tone.

"Give me credit at least, Helen," he cried, "for being ordinarily decent. You shall choose either Lechfort or Massingham, and it will be yours for life. Besides, I could not afford to live in them myself. I am forced to take the title and the estates; but, as you know, the income from them is not large, and all Geoffrey's money was, of course, left to you."

"I will agree to anything," she said listlessly, "which you and my solicitors advise."

He drew a little nearer to her, and the danger light flashed once more in his eyes.

"Helen," he said, "I want you to agree to something else, which has nothing to do with Mr. Cunliffe, which has nothing to do with anybody except yourself."

"Well?"

The attempt at discouragement was obvious. He chose to ignore it.

"Geoffrey has been dead now for three years——"

She stopped him.

"He has disappeared for three years," she corrected. "Do you mind leaving it like that?"

"He is dead. The proofs are absolute. We have his clothes and his belongings, the testimony of his guides, the word of those who saw him dead. God knows that I am not one who ever hankered after dead men's shoes. I would bring him to life if I could, but it is impossible. Helen, you must learn to realize this."

She looked him steadily in the eyes.

"The proofs," she said slowly, "may seem convincing. I do not blame the courts for admitting them, or you for taking the title; yet, for myself, I am a woman, and I must have something to live for. I am going on hoping. What else can I do?"

"You can make others happy," he cried, his voice thick with emotion. "Happiness for yourself lies—that way. It is useless to nurse a dead sorrow. Geoffrey is dead, poor chap, and believe me, Helen, I am sorry. But there is the future."

"I shall live on—and hope," she murmured.

"Helen, when you say that," he answered, "you rob me of the one great hope of my life. You know very well what I mean. You know that I love you. No, don't shrink from me. I am not a poisonous thing. There is nothing criminal in loving you. If there is, I have been a criminal all my life, for I have never cared for any other woman. I don't ask for anything now; no, not even for hope. It is too soon. You have not realized as yet that Geoffrey has gone. I am going to wait very quietly and very patiently. I ask for nothing, but I want you to know."

She drew her skirts coldly away from contact with him.

"Morton," she said, "perhaps it is as well that you have spoken. I can tell you my mind now plainly. If you wish to remain my friend, you will never breathe a word of this again. To you, Geoffrey may seem dead; to me he is alive. I am a woman, you know, and I am hard to convince. Facts count for little with me against consciousness. I feel that Geoffrey is alive; I refuse to believe him dead. He may never come back to me, but I shall wait for him—and hope."

"What hope can you have?" he protested bitterly. "You read the letter from Colonel Denny?"

"Other Englishmen were travelling that way."

"His clothes? They were his. His tailor has proved it."

"He may have lent them, or they may have been stolen."

"His silence?"

"He is in a country as silent as the grave."

"It is ridiculous," he cried passionately. "You will not listen to reason. It is madness. You are offering up the best years of your life a fruitless sacrifice—to what? God knows. You mean that you will never listen to me, that you will cling to this miserable folly throughout your life and mine. You will wreck them both for a whim—a superstition."

"I am Geoffrey's wife," she said. "So I shall always feel myself until——"

"Until what?"

"Until I know that he is dead."

"Until you know that he is dead," the man repeated slowly. "That is certain enough already. Yet tell me this—what further proof will satisfy you?"

"The sight of his body, or speech with one who has actually seen it," she answered slowly. "Nothing else."

The man ground his heel upon the stone floor, and his face was set and white.

"Listen, Helen," he said. "I am an idle man. I will humour your fancy. You will not listen to me unless you have speech with some one who has seen Geoffrey's body, or can bring you certain word of his death. Very well. Where he went I will go. I will follow in his footsteps until I come to the end. He is dead. I know it. Never mind, I will bring you the proof. And then?"

"You mean it!" she cried. "You will go?"

"Yes, I will go. And then?"

She shook her head sadly.

"I cannot make any bargain," she said. "It is too hideous. Besides, you know my belief. You will find Geoffrey alive. I am sure of it. You will bring him home to me. If you do that—oh, if you do that!"

The light upon her face was a brilliant revelation of her surpassing beauty. But the man who saw it was white to the lips.

To him it was torture. If only she would ever care for him like that.

"I will take my chance," he said slowly; "but remember that before I start I warn you. I shall come back alone. That I am sure of before I start. Try and make up your mind to it, or you will only be courting a bitter disappointment."

She answered him with apparent irrelevance.

"When shall you start?"

"To-morrow."

¶

THERE was a time when the man had clung to life, but that time had gone by. It was for death now that he prayed, for forgetfulness, for oblivion. Of time he had lost all count. There was no change in the days. The same pitiless sun burned and scorched his flesh from mid-day to sundown. Every evening he breathed the same little gasp of relief as the fiery red ball sank behind the low line of wild storm-beaten rocks. Yet the nights brought no relief. As the darkness fell came the keen icy winds, the death-like silence, the unutterable sense of desolation, which made him glad even to crane his neck and watch the dark forms of the savage warriors who guarded him gathered round a fire of logs outside their hut. At first he had treated the privations which he was made to endure, the leering gibes and hideous mockery of his yellow-skinned guards, with the full contempt of a strong, brave man.

He had nerved himself to face death, and he had closed the door upon all that host of torturing thoughts which had made such an end so bitter. But the time had been too long. More than once already he had broken down, had felt a sudden burning at his eyeballs, and the rush of warm, unmanly tears. Beyond, there seemed to be still more terrible things. Already he had experienced a hideous unloosing of all fixed thought, he had burst into violent and incoherent speech, which had sounded strangely even to his own ears. He had felt himself dimly to be on the threshold of that fearful world where the body lives and the mind is held by demons. Then he had looked about him with feverish and sick desire for a weapon with which to escape. Anything sooner than the horrible chains of madness—death a thousand times rather, if by any means he could compass his own self-destruction. But there was no weapon. The ill-clad, pitiless savages who guarded him took zealous care that the white-faced interloper, who had dared to journey to within sight of their holy city, should not escape them.

By degrees he had learned a little of their language. One night he gathered easily from their signs and disjointed words that they were discussing his death. They were weary of their solitude, of their lonely guard upon the mountains. Better finish him off or swear that they had cut him down whilst endeavouring to escape. They die so slowly, these white-faced devils, and the time hung heavy upon their hands up here in the lonely pass. But there was always a majority who shook their heads solemnly and were firm. To end his torture would mean death to every one of them. Their orders were to keep him alive. Their own heads would grin from the walls which bounded the slaughter-house of the city if they disobeyed. So those who were weary went out and kicked him savagely to relieve their feelings, and returned to the shelter of the hut.

Then there came a night when he awoke with a sharp cry and a rush of blood to his poor, numbed heart, from one of those long, agonizing dozes, which was as near as ever he could come to sleep. The cry was stifled by a hot hand thrust upon his mouth, and a gentle exclamation of warning. A man had crept out from the shadow of the rocks, and was standing beside him. A man whose face was familiar, whose expression was one of horrified pity. He told himself that this must be a nightmare—he had had them before, and he dug at his eyeballs, and then opening them wider stared and stared again. But the man's face did not fade away as those others had done. On the contrary he was drawing nearer, his trembling lips were parted, and a hoarse whisper came from them:—

"Geoffrey. Why, Geoffrey, this is horrible. What, in God's name, have they been doing to you?"

Then the sleeping mind of the man awoke, and his heart beat thick and strong. He had buried all hope long ago. This was like new life.

"Morton," he whispered faintly. "Speak to me again softly. Let me feel you. I want to be sure that you are flesh and blood. I have had so many fancies in the night time. Let me be sure that this is not another cursed dream."

The man drew nearer to him, and the glazed eyes of the captive lit up as though with fire. Whatever those others might have been this was a real and palpable presence.

"You know me, Geoffrey, old chap. I came out here to look for you. They said that these devils had done you to death. Thank God that I have found you. Have courage, Geoff."

"Thank God, indeed!" the man sobbed. "Be still for a moment, Morton; let me think."

There was a short, tense silence. His heart was thumping against his ribs, and his head swam. Yet with this sudden birth of hope something of his old coolness was back again. He was able to think, and to think clearly. Afar off, there was a break in the night, the dawn was already brightening in the east. Soon they would be bringing his handful of dried peas and water. He looked anxiously towards the hut where all was still.

"You are not alone, Morton?" he whispered. "How many of you are there?"

"Only myself and one guide, an Afghan," the newcomer answered. "The others have all deserted. I started with twenty, and twenty carriers, but they have melted away. We have had to fight twice."

"There are twelve men guarding me," the prisoner whispered, motioning towards the hut. "Soon they will wake and bring me food. If you set me free now, we should not be able to get far enough away. Go and hide till night comes again. When it is dark enough I will call out as though with pain. They will take no notice. I have shrieked through a whole night, and they have not turned their heads. Come softly up to me then, and have a knife ready to cut these accursed ropes How did you come—on foot?"

"I have horses; two spare ones—little mountain ponies. They climb the mountains like cats. Once away they will never catch us. Bear up, old chap, till to-night."

¶

ALL through the long day the man, who seemed indeed to be enduring a perpetual crucifixion, appeared to be growing weaker and weaker. The soldiers who guarded him wagged their heads, came out to stare, and jabbered amongst themselves. He was nearing his end; that was certain. No one but a strong man could have held out so long. It was nearly all over now. They decided to send one of their number to the city with the news. Their instructions had been to keep him alive as long as possible. He was to remain there, alive or dead, an awful message from this people to the hated strangers who should seek to force their way on towards the sacred city. But when their backs were turned there was a change in the man. A new light was in his eyes, the fire of a new hope was burning once more in his veins. Yet that day was the longest he had ever known. Surely the sun had never moved so slowly, the darkness had never been so long delayed.

Yet slowly though that fiery red ball sank into the west, his setting was none the less sure. At last his rim touched the broken line of rocky hills, beyond which was home and freedom. Then, all quivering with impatience, the man waited whilst grey deepened into black, and the voices of his guards, seated together in the distance, grew drowsier and fainter. And the day too had been long, the longest of his life, to the man who lay behind a rock waiting only a few hundred yards away. Months ago, when first he had heard some vague rumours of an Englishman held in captivity and torture by this cruel and savage people, he had had only one thought—to push on at all hazards. He had only half believed their story; even if there were truth in it, he had not expected to find in their captive the man to find some trace of whom was the avowed object of his expedition.

During that long, horrible day he began to realize what the finding of Geoffrey must mean to him. It was the death-blow to his hopes. With this man's return to life must end the one great desire of his heart. It was like slow madness creeping into his brain. He had never doubted but he would go home after many dangers and many privations to take her hand in his, to tell her that he had done all that a man could do, that failure was written in the book of death beforehand, and then, some day, to plead for his reward. He would not have hurried her; she was not a woman to be easily won, but in the end his persistence and his devotion must have triumphed. This was how he had thought of the future; his worst imaginings had never included such a possibility as this. He was to return shamefaced and

corrected, to confess that she was right, to take her husband home to her, and leave them to their happiness. What was there left for him? Without Helen life in any form was barely endurable. The desire for her had been the one great desire of his life. He looked back over the bare, wild country across which he had come, across the iron-girt hills on which never a tree or a shrub could blossom, and up the great gorge where every footstep had been taken in peril, and every loose stone dislodged by their cautious progress had fallen a thousand feet. And as the day wore on, the man's passion grew, and voices whispered in his ear. Helen was so beautiful; she would so soon learn to love him.

If he crept away now down into the little valley where the ponies were tethered and his worn-out guide was sleeping, in an hour he would be far away. The way back was easy. There would be no one to whisper of his treachery, rather he would be praised for his gallant journey into the heart of a dangerous country. What was Geoffrey to him? There had been no pretence of friendship between them; they were kin, and that was all. And Helen. He closed his eyes and stood once more by her side upon the balcony. The perfume of her hair, the soft, silent music of her eyes—with a swift rush of memories these things became suddenly real to him in the deep silence of a brooding and unpeopled land.

When the sun set he was ten miles away, riding with white, hard face and loose hands, breathing sharply, and with a glare in his eyes which was like the glare of a madman. For he was pursued by ghosts, they were on every side of him, in front, their voices whispered to him through the gathering darkness. Was it he, Morton Felbrigge, soldier and gentleman, a man of honour and of good conscience, who was riding into the night with ashen cheeks? Never daring to look behind, trembling at every shadow and starting at every breath of wind which moaned through the few lone trees. He thought of his last campaign, of that terrible battle from whence he had come drenched with blood, with the body of his comrade upon his shoulders and the thunderous applause of his wildly excited regiment in his ears. He thought of the small iron cross which the King had pinned to his breast, and which, it had seemed to him, must for ever keep the man against whose heart it beat from even the passing thought of meanness or dishonour. He thought of the woman who trusted him, with whom his life, if indeed he ever dared to claim her, must be one long living lie. Of the grim secret which, as the years went on, would work in his veins like poison, until the hour of inevitable confession came, and the eyes, which had learned to look upon him kindly, blazed out the scorn of a wronged and deceived woman. He thought of these things until his head was full of horror, and he hated himself and what he was doing with a deadly, sickening hatred. Yet he rode on still into the night.

And behind, across the steppes and up the gorge, a man was waiting for him with breathless and passionate eagerness. The sun had set and the darkness had come. With pain and difficulty he moved his head a little and looked around. Where was Morton, his deliverer? Why did he not come? Every moment now was a golden moment wasted. The night was dark, his guards were asleep. Many times his cry, strained at first, but pitifully now in earnest, had wailed out upon the thick darkness. Sometimes his guards had cursed, sometimes an animal from the distant belt of woods had yelped back an answer, but Morton never came, and of all the nights of torture which the man had passed that was the cruellest. When morning came he was very near to death, when the mid-day sun beat upon his head he was raving. When night came again, he was in a torpor, and death hovered around.

He was still unconscious when a knife cut his bonds and the arm of a strong man lifted him, a poor helpless wreck, from the ground. The motion of a pony revived him for a moment, at the sound of a shot he opened his eyes. He was in a strange place, and, as he staggered back to consciousness, he saw such a sight as few have looked upon. He saw Morton, with blood streaming from his face, and eyes flashing like a man possessed of devils. With a two-edged sword, which gleamed in his hand like whirling silver, he had cut down three of his assailants. In his left hand his revolver was flashing out the fires of death. The desire of life seized hold of the half-conscious man. He slipped from his pony, and snatching a sword from the dead hand of a prostrate man, joined in the fray. It was a battle against hideous odds, but

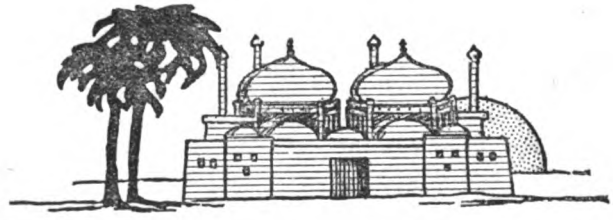
when it was over Geoffrey was unhurt, and his deliverer, with the stump of an arm hanging useless by his side and the lust of blood in his red eyes, was looking about for more men to kill—and there were none.

¶

IT was years before Geoffrey knew the whole truth, but he and Helen heard it together one Christmas morning, when a great guest honoured them by coming straight to Elton Towers on his return from a campaign which had made his name a household one, and himself the idol of an enthusiastic country. Outside, the way across the park to church was lined with people who were waiting to see him pass out, who had come from far and near on the chance of seeing him. He took them both into the great library and bade them listen to him.

With slow bitter words and bent head he told them the story of that night and day. He told them of his flight and of the agony of his repentance, how he had ridden back through the soft, grey dawnlight and the burning heat as though the fires of hell were at his back. But they never let him finish. Geoffrey had seized his hands, and with a deep sob had begged him to stop. But the woman bent over and closed his white lips with hers.

When they passed out across the park and between the lines of people who had been waiting with uncovered heads in deep respectful silence for a glimpse of him, he bowed to them with a smile which for many years no man had seen. Those who knew him from his photographs wondered. Later, in the clubs, men congratulated him upon his altered looks and obvious happiness. He laughed at them always and passed on. He alone knew how slight the joy which his fame and success had brought, how immeasurably sweet the dropping of that grim burden of self-hatred, which at the touch of her lips and the clasp of Geoffrey's hands had fallen away from him for ever. The tragedy of that night has still a dark corner in his mind—but the key has been turned upon it and the fires are extinct.



¶ A PROMINENT feature in *CASSELL'S MAGAZINE* for AUGUST—now on sale—is a long opening instalment of "THE MYSTERY OF UNCLE BOLLARD." This fine story deals with intrigue and romantic adventure in the Pacific, and is by H. DE VERE STACPOOLE, author of "The Blue Lagoon."

¶ THE first story in a dramatic new series by Bruce Graeme (author of "Blackshirt") will appear in the same issue, which also contains an enlightening and entertaining article by Brigadier-General A. C. Critchley, C.M.G., D.S.O., on the new sport of Greyhound Racing.

¶ *Cassell's Magazine* for August will also contain a long, complete novel by Frank H. Shaw, and numerous other contributions. You can get the August *Cassell's* now—price 1/-.

Lamb on Old Pleasures

I WAS pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink still of an afternoon) some of these *speciosa miracula* upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking, how favourable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to over-shade the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

" I wish the good old times would come again," she said, " when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean, that I want to be poor; but there is a middle state " ;—so she was pleased to ramble on—" in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O ! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times !) we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

" Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so thread-bare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent-garden ? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bed-wards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating* you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose pages with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man ? "

Gibbon's Life-Work

IT was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed fryars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind. But my original plan was circumscribed to the decay of the city rather than of the empire : and, though my reading and reflections began to point towards that object, some years elapsed, and several avocations intervened, before I was seriously engaged in the execution of that laborious work.

I have presumed to mark the moment of conception : I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future date of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.

Over The Hill

"Adventures are to the adventurous"

By E. TEMPLE THURSTON

IT is too much to convey in so little space. They had grown up together and there are a hundred and one stages in growing up, so subtle and delicate in their evolutions as to need etching with a needle point. Heavy paint on a broad palette will not do, but I must use it. Then I must paint only the elemental tones and colours. A Futurist picture it will be, all sudden and startling. Instead of revealing the quaint tricks of a man's heart, it will present to you the glaring, ill-drawn figure, a thing of cardboard, cut out with a scissors, wherein the only claim to your approval is that it is Futurist and up-to-date.

For what but the point of a needle could delineate that intangible period of complex change, between those days when they played games in which they were husband and wife and that moment when she returned for her first holidays from school?

Suddenly the breadth of oceans was separating them. They were looking at each other across vast silences where voices might have spoken, but were gagged and dumb. And it had taken a matter of no more than four months to effect this overwhelming yet impalpable change.

All sorts and conditions of games they had played together before ever the meanings of life had come to them and while, in that phase of childhood, they were still only assimilating facts. This is the age when children are deputed to gather facts in their world, just as they are sent out into the wood to gather faggots. The fire the faggots make concerns them scarce at all. A twisted stick like a writhing snake brings more joy in the finding than a straight one, but both make the same fire. It is like that in them with facts.

The marriage of men and women to these two had been a fact they had gathered. It had no meaning. Husbands and wives lived together. They would live together as well. Of necessity however the spirit of adventure must come into it. At that age, facts combine to make adventure, or they are discarded from the consciousness of a child. That is why the facts of common mathematics are so rarely assimilated. There is no adventure in them.

It was their adventure that they were married and lived together on a desert island. Their desert island was in a wood, more than a mile from home. There they had built a hut by the side of a stream, a stream where there grew harebells and primroses, wild mint and deep blue forget-me-nots, a stream where quick brown water flowed down from the hills washing the pebbles to gold and gathering them in little heaps.

That was where he made his fortune. He was a gold miner, a rough-diamond, living in his shirt sleeves, brutal but strong and brave. He had carried off a princess from her father's castle in Spain. Castles in Spain were facts. Grown up people talked of them and Spain was on the map.

He gave her pin-money every Saturday—one half of his weekly allowance, representing in that mysterious thing called—money—the fortune of gold he snatched from the miner's stream. The sum he allowed her amounted to a half-penny. As often as not he borrowed it back again and never returned it. It made such a hole in his allowance. But always he went through the ceremony of giving it—a serious occasion.

Often the penny had to be changed to two half-pennies at a shop in the village. Saturdays were half holidays. They would meet at their hut in the wood. Never a soul knew of their double life. Then he would give her the half-penny.

"My dear," he would say—"here is your pin-money——" For which, when it was in her hand, she would kiss him tenderly.

He worked hard in the stream, while she strayed often far away by herself in the woods, picking flowers for the house. Some

stones in the stream were more like gold than others. It was an arduous labour to find them. But he was accumulating his fortune. In a corner of the hut, there was a pile of pebbles, glittering like nuggets in the sunshine. It was necessary to take them up in his hand, each one, and lick them to make them shine. Whenever he did that, and they did shine, he felt mean about her pin-money ; but before the middle of the next week he had borrowed it back again.

She always gave up her half-penny gently and without complaint. He was so strong. As gently and uncomplainingly she had left that castle in Spain and come away with him to the desert island. It had been a beautiful castle. The window panes were of crystal, not glass. But he had said her father was cruel, so she supposed it was so.

They had lived on the desert island for two whole Springs and two whole Summers without discovery, which was a time corresponding to many years. Wednesday and Saturday afternoons and sometimes with thrilling deceits and daring contrivances, Sunday afternoons as well, these were the hours of that lifetime.

Once they had brought with them green apples and broken pieces of dog biscuits—in which the little spots of meat were currants in a rich cake, often picked out and eaten separately. That was a day of banquets, after the fashion of the banquet of Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Medes and Persians. Bible history is a fact, wherein incidents are remembered, not for their meaning, but because of their relation to adventure.

After the feast, he had issued a decree that no more luxuries of food were to be brought to the hut. They lived on a desert island. They must find their own food. He was brave and strong and he must be obeyed.

Whilst he was searching for gold, it was not only flowers she gathered, but wild apples—very green—little red strawberries ; a certain grass which, when pulled out of its sheath, was sweet to the taste ; sorrel, that screwed up the face, it was so acid ; pig-nuts, covered with earth, but, before eaten, washed in the stream. In that late time of the year, there were wild filberts and blackberries in abundance. He set traps and brought in once, a dead field mouse. That was food, but they never ate it, though he skinned it with his pocket knife and brought it to her.

" We could make a fire," he said, but when he saw the fact shuddering behind the adventure in her eyes, he said no more.

Again, he brought in a bird from his trap —a missel thrush. It was alive.

" We could cook it in boiling water," he said. " It would make a great dish."

She begged with tears in her eyes for its life and its freedom. She clung to his shoulder and put her cool lips against his cheek and whispered that she was his wife and craved that one boon and would take no pin-money that week. She murmured that he was brave and strong and that this thing palpitating in his hand was weak and timid.

He was often wondering in those days whether he was so brave and strong. This might prove it. Against all that glory of the hunter in possession of his prey, he opened his hand and the bird fled out. They stood together by the stream and watched it shoot with a mad ecstasy into the blue air. They waited listening to the sharp note of its freedom as it flung itself with beating wings into the trees and disappeared. Then she clung to him passionately with all her body, and cried. He put her away gently, saying he must get to his work and went down, ankle deep, into the swirl of the stream.

When he brought back eggs for their larder, she could say nothing to that. There was a limit to woman's interference. He took no more than one from each nest. They sat in the hut in all solemnity, making a meal off sorrel, pig-nuts and a blackbird's egg—hard boiled.

" For what we have received," he murmured, when the meal was done—" may the Lord make us truly thankful—Amen." And the last part of the sentence was all run together like a thread in a seam that has drawn. It was a fact that his father said grace so, therefore it added reality to adventure.

One day they were discovered. It is hard to conceal married life, even on a desert island. In the world one wears a married look. On a desert island it is more subtle than that, but still as difficult to hide.

Some distance from where stood their hut, the stream followed a sharp bend of the bank and round the corner eddied in a pool, with gleaming gravel bottom and water two feet deep. To the little proportions of that stream, it was a lake. And these were the little proportions in which they lived. This was their world. To them

almost it was an inland sea. When the wind rippled its surface, there were waves, mountainous waves, into which fallen leaves would wrestle tossed up and down like ships struggling in the trough of the sea.

They lay many hours together, side by side on the bank above that pool, staring down into the brown water where weeds writhed like water snakes in the wandering eddies that caught them; where sometimes young fishes came rushing in a frightened crowd. All this was a vision into the wonders of the deep. Scarcely a word fell between them. Every now and again, he would say—"Look!" That was all. No gold dredging in the stream would be done that day. They would lie there till the dandelion seed blew the hour it was, and then go home.

And all the way home, they would seldom speak. Their minds were still at the bottom of that inland sea. Out of some cosmic wisdom and sense of beauty—that cosmic wisdom and sense that through the days of childhood is eaten away by the corrosive facts of life—they made great pictures out of the depths of that inland sea, pictures that Doré would have wondered at for the marvels they revealed. And though they never spoke, strangely they seemed to know each other's pictures. She saw his pictures. He saw hers. They had not words to spoil them.

It was a hot day in June, so hot and still that the water on the inland sea was as smooth and brilliant as the crystal window in her castle in Spain.

There was no mystery in those depths that day. They could count the pebbles on the bottom. Perhaps it was seeing a nugget of gold and knowing that to secure it would wet him through, perhaps it was this put the thought into his head.

"People get drowned at sea," he said.

And she knew all that he meant.

It was a new adventure to be drowned. It was no less an adventure to be saved. Somehow she knew it was to be saved he meant. After drowning there was nothing, whereas everything pointed to the fact that he was intended to save. He was brave and strong. She was to be nearly drowned. Her heart beat quicker.

"It's wet," she replied—"and there are no towels."

God made women to realise these difficulties, men to overcome them.

"People sometimes are drowned naked," he said presently, for amongst those pictures of the shimmering depths, he had seen bodies floating and while some were fully dressed with knives and pistols in their belts, others were like fishes, gleaming white—drowned, as he had often seen himself when he lay, still moments, naked in his bath at home.

It was a big project and for a long while they were silent. At last he said—

"We could leave our clothes in the house."

She knew his mind was set upon it then and when he asked her if she had a handkerchief and she said—yes—they both rose in silence to their feet and walked towards the hut.

"You could have been going pearl fishing in the Southern Pacific," he said as they took off their garments. "In a Spanish Galleon," he went on.

"With jewels down under the deck," she whispered.

"And a crucifix nailed to the mast," said he, "and big guns sticking out of holes in the side——"

"And little windows at the back," she added.

She frilled his story—but it was his story.

"There could have been a fearful storm and all the sails would have been torn, like the cook tears up the table cloths to make plum-puddings in. And then the man looking out in the bows 'll cry out—'Land to starboard!'"

He had no sense of time. From one tense to another he rocked like the ship itself.

"I shall go and say my prayers at the crucifix that's nailed to the mast," she broke in.

He permitted that. For that very purpose he had nailed the crucifix there, and slipping off her last little garment, she had known that was why he had done it.

Then they stood there, naked in the sunshine and laughed. And the notes of their laughter were all part of the light, of the air, of the very trees about them. They had the voice of the stream in their little throats. This was the greatest adventure of all.

He watched her creeping down the bank of the stream, stepping like a faun through the wood to that corner where the pool was hidden. There she went, a sprite, a thing of Nature, with the pink tints of pearl on her skin, her whole body glittering like a pale flame through the trees.

Strong and brave he stood there, waiting

till he heard her cry—her cry out of the blinding fury of the storm. And there it was an English wood, spattered and spangled with June sunshine!

At the sound of her voice he leapt forward. In a moment he was on the bank above her and there she stood in the water, all silver and blue, catching at her breath and hoping he would save her soon.

Hot though the day was, he knew the water was cold. But how came it that a man should care for that! Catching his breath, he leapt into the deep and bound her, breathing quickly, in his arms.

They were standing there like two sprites in that pool in the wood, the reflections all broken in the water with splashes of the pink of flesh, and splashes of the blue of heaven, when the trees burst asunder and the wrath of a human being thundered upon them from the bank.

II

THIS became their first separation. Heads of families talked in council, horrified at the report that had been brought them. School was the only salvation.

They tried to meet in the hut again to say farewell. All was construed in the elusive terms of adventure. She was being carried back to her father's castle in Spain. Their attempt to meet was frustrated. Everywhere, there were watching eyes. They saw each other only in distances and then came the day of departure.

It seemed a small vista at first, those vast spaces through which they had travelled, compared with the few acres of woodland where adventure had made a world. But the change came quickly. Soon the football field was of vast acreage, and out of bounds, there stretched a whole continent of space. New values arose in his mind. Not only distances he measured with a different eye, but virtues were changed. It was no longer strength to labour indefatigably as he had done in that stream of gold but rather to wrestle victoriously with a boy stronger than himself. No longer was it brave to give battle to the dangers of the mind that are in dreams, in pictures imagined, in imperfect visions when the very soul in him had trembled and still was staunch. Bravery it became to face, unflinching, the assaulting facts of life. There was wakened in him the ambition, upright in his mind, to be a man.

Yet for those first few nights, as he lay wakeful and hot-eyed, staring into the darkness, in that new, comfortless dormitory bed, he had cried, softly, quietly but none the less with the aching torment of severance in his heart.

It was not definitely her he missed. She was in and out of his thoughts, a recurrent thread, luminous and brilliant in the pattern of his mind. But altogether it was not her. There had been some sensation of a world gone by; slipped out of his reach; not that he felt it to be in such sense a world, so much as a light to see things by, a colour in the big entirety of things as though he had been looking through water, from the bottom of that pool, and seen the world through its crystal, whereas now he was to see it in the naked light of sky.

There was no word in the whole of his vocabulary to express why he cried. A door had shut somewhere in his brain. He was alone. More than that, he was outside.

Before the term was over, another door had opened. He had passed within it and it was a place where words were comprehensive. It was a place where he found he was neither strong nor brave.

In some way the change was the same, though more delicate and subtle with her. It was the same in the sense that a door had been closed, but in contemplation of other virtues, she forgot the bravery and strength of him, ankle deep, searching daily for his stones in that stream of gold.

They brought her—gently it seemed to them—to think of herself. Behind and on the other side of that door, she had thought of him. Never a fear had she shown while she had stood waiting in the cold, sharp water for him to save her. But somewhere in her mind had been fear. Something deeper in her consciousness had not recognised it. That was all. They were beginning to show her now that it was fear. But slowly they showed her more. Before the first two months of that term were over, she found the blood hot in her cheeks when she remembered how they had stood there, naked, under the open sky. By the time she came home again, she was in a state of consciousness that she had forgotten all about it.

These were changes that came gradually, even though the time that passed was short. But it was not swift. A thousand years of facts and conscious life had passed her by.

How could it be swift? It even seemed a thousand years to her.

Yet the fear they had shown her was there in her mind at the thought of going home. They would meet and it seemed a thousand times that someone had whispered to her how terrible it was that they should. It was not a voice within her, but one from without. Almost she could have turned, expecting to find someone there.

Somewhat in apprehension she spoke of it once, of the voice, but not of what it said; spoke to a mistress who had shown her kindness.

"What is it?" she had asked.

And the mistress had replied it was her conscience. "Your little soul is waking up to the meaning of life," she said.

"Then where does it really speak?" she asked again.

"In your heart, my dear."

"But my heart's inside."

"And isn't the voice inside?"

"No—I hear it inside—but it's outside and everywhere. It's not me—it's someone else—a lot of someone elses."

And when she said that, she seemed to remember that once there was a voice within; a voice that had told her how brave and strong he was; the same voice that had told her of all the wonders she had seen at the bottom of that inland sea. It had told her of the wonders he had seen as well. She felt that it could have told her everything that was wonderful in earth and sky.

It never spoke to her now. Only these other voices from without, telling her a thousand things besides the terror in the thought that they would meet again when she went home.

But it was not so terrible after all.

He had come flying past her down the road on a bicycle and had shouted over his shoulder as he went by—

"I learnt this thing at school."

He was all changed. Still he was strong. He looked as though he had conquered the bicycle and was riding it to destruction.

Then suddenly she remembered how once she had spoken to him about death. Someone had died in the village.

"What is death?" she had asked him.

And with all his bravery and strength he had said—"Death? Death's nothing. It's just looking over the top of the hill." He had pointed away through the trees to the blue line of hills they so often climbed.

She remembered that and felt as he went by that if it were a matter of looking over the top of the hill, he would find it easier, on his bicycle, to be coasting down to the valley.

III

THIS was the beginning of that intangible period of complex change. The distance between them only widened as the years went by. A comprehension and consciousness of the material of life arose between them like a wall, dividing the spaces of their souls—a wall to which a course was added every year. Always it was possible to see over the top. Often, secretly, they watched each other. But year by year, it became harder and more impossible to climb.

He saw her growing into the thin-limbed school-girl, with nervous laughter, affected tossings of loose and wayward hair and agitated lengthenings of skirts. No less she saw him become the selfish schoolboy, with raucous, throaty voice and codes of honour that were brutal more than just. Still, there were moments when they did watch each other, even until he was a young man, feeling perpetually for the straightness of his tie and she a young woman with her hair put up and serious attitudes of mind.

There came a day, with college left behind him, when he was to set out into the world. All his things were packed. There was the hour or two before starting when nothing remained to do. He went up to his bedroom to see that nothing had been forgotten and found himself standing by the window, looking across the garden to the folds of that raiment of the country, with its seams of little hedges and its ribands of light.

And there, like a shadow of a fold in all that garment, was their wood. And there were the hills beyond. Of a sudden he heard a sound, a sound indistinguishable between the soft falling of footsteps, or the gentle knock on a door or the whisper of a voice begging for entrance; such a sound as when heard in the conscious mind, you call out—"Come in—" and find it is only the wind, playing through a chink of the door.

He did not hear it consciously. It came from within and from afar off. But consciously and definitely, he responded to it. Straightway he went downstairs and out of the house, across the garden and through the fields to her house.

He found her in her father's garden, picking a basket of roses and in the distance, as he came down the path, he thought how near to Nature she had grown and saw a vision—eluding words—of God picking her just as she picked the roses from the trees.

And with her, as he approached her, it was not that a pulse beat quicker, for her cheek was cool, but that as she watched him, it seemed as though a star were falling from heaven and must reach earth.

He came, lifting his hat from his head, saying he had come to say good-bye.

"I heard you were going to-day," she replied.

"In two hours," he answered.

"And for two years?"

"Not less."

She took off a glove that was protecting her hand from the thorns on the rose trees and, with a smile that was neither of gladness nor tears, neither of sadness nor mirth, but rather as if her memory had smiled tenderly and, unknown to her had stolen the expression to her eyes—with such a smile, she held out her hand. When he took it, it was cool like a stone that lies at the bottom of a stream.

"Good-bye," she said. Her voice might have been a breeze stealing into the garden from across the fields—"I wonder what the world will make of you."

He was nearer consciousness and the material when he answered—"I wonder what I shall make of the world."

And it was only when he had gone that she felt he had been there at all.

IV

BEFORE the two years were passed, he had fallen in love. It was a woman just older than himself, fulfilling all his need of beauty, and gently teaching him everything that he could make of the world.

"We'll win," she had said to him softly—"You and I, we'll win."

This was the tinder struck, when he felt the first flame of ambition and desire. A thousand things he was going to do in the world; a great place he was going to make of it. Here was love and with it strength and never did it seem he had felt so brave in all his life. Every consciousness quickened in him.

"You make me alive," he said. "I can see to-morrow and all the years ahead. Everything tingles when I touch it."

She bent her head for him to touch her hair. She gave him her lips for his to kiss.

"Death 'll be a terrible thing one day," he said as she lay in his arms.

"This is life," she whispered—"You and I don't think of death."

No conscious memory ever came to him of what once he had said of death. But that night he dreamed he was in a wood. It was a place he had never seen. He was struggling to find his way out. He was lost, but a voice was calling to him and he knew it was her whom he had kissed the night before but it was not her voice. He followed the sound of the voice and by tortuous paths it led him out of the wood. Then he was climbing a hill and the voice was in the air about him, though no one was to be seen. Yet the voice was constant and sometimes it came from the note of a bird that flew by and sometimes from the rustling of the leaves in the trees.

At last he came to the top of the hill, when he knew the voice had been urging him to see what lay on the other side. He stood on the crest and gazed beyond and there was nothing but water and in the water lay the body of a little girl and she was naked and he knew she was drowned.

Then he heard the voice saying—

"This will be death," when he felt it was not what it might have been but what he had made it.

After that, he dreamt no more.

The next day he said he was going home to tell his people of his or their engagement.

"I want to tell them myself, before they meet you," he said, and with all the force of her gentleness she let him go.

It was as he came near home, that he realised there was not the desire in him to tell his people, so much as to tell her. The same sudden sound had come into his consciousness as when he had been impelled to say good-bye. He did not even go to his father's house, but straight to her's.

"She ought to know," he said aloud, and only a farm-hand, passing, heard the words. His ears were deaf to them.

They told him she was out and he turned away without a word. There was a voice in his ears and it was the voice of his dream. It seemed to him all the time he walked, that he was just thinking of the dream; but deeper than that, he was following the voice. It led him down to the wood; just the same as it had been fifteen years before.

There was the hut. The trees of the wood

had sheltered it from the storms of winter. He bent down in a sudden impulse and found a heap of dull black pebbles underneath a pall of leaves.

Something rose hot and stinging in his eyes and he left the hut as though a poisonous weed had grown there and its bitterness were an odour in the air.

He looked at the stream with its quick brown water gurgling by and wondered how he had ever thought it so mighty and then so small again. For it was so small and yet with the power it drew him along its banks, it was as mighty as a roaring cataract.

He followed the line of the bank and turned the corner that revealed the eddying pool. And now the voice was silent and it was what he had known all the time. She was lying there in the long growth of the summer grass and she was staring down into the unbroken water.

Slowly she rose to her feet.

" I've come to tell you something," he said.

" I know."

She did know. All women know.

" I'm in love," he went on.

" I know," she repeated.

" How did you know ? " he asked.

She raised her head and looked into the blue of the sky. She drooped her head and looked into the silver of the water below.

" How did you know ? " he repeated—" because I never knew—till now."

And he looked through her and beyond her, away to the crest of the hills. And wherever he looked—she was there.

Memory

SO shuts the marigold her leaves
At the departure of the sun ;
So from the honeysuckle sheaves
The bee goes when the day is done ;
So sits the turtle when she is but one,
And so all woe, as I since she is gone.

To some few birds kind Nature hath
Made all the summer as one day :
Which once enjoy'd, cold winter's wrath
As night they sleeping pass away.
Those happy creatures are, that know not yet
The pain to be deprived or to forget.

I oft have heard men say there be
Some that with confidence profess
The helpful Art of Memory :
But could they teach Forgetfulness,
I'd learn ; and try what further art could do
To make me love her and forget her too.

WILLIAM BROWNE.

The Hour-Glass

An accidental hiatus in time and its dramatic results

By ROBERT BARR

BERTRAM EASTFORD had intended to pass the shop of his old friend, the curiosity dealer, into whose pockets so much of his money had gone for trinkets gathered from all quarters of the globe. He knew it was weakness on his part to select that street when he might have taken another, but he thought it would do no harm to treat himself to one glance at the seductive window of the old curiosity shop, where the dealer was in the habit of displaying his latest acquisitions. The window was never quite the same, and it had a continued fascination for Bertram Eastford; but this time, he said to himself resolutely, he would not enter, having, as he assured himself, the strength of mind to forego this temptation. However, he reckoned without his window, for in it there was an old object newly displayed which caught his attention as effectually as a half-driven nail arrests the hem of a cloak. On the central shelf of the window stood an hour-glass, its framework of some wood as black as ebony. He stood gazing at it for a moment, then turned to the door and went inside, greeting the ancient shopman, whom he knew so well.

"I want to look at the hour-glass you have in the window," he said.

"Ah, yes," replied the curiosity dealer; "the cheap watch has driven the hour-glass out of the commercial market, and we rarely pick up a thing like that nowadays."

He took the hour-glass from the shelf in the window, reversed it, and placed it on a table. The ruddy sand began to pour through into the lower receptacle in a thin, constant stream, as if it were blood that had been dried and powdered. Eastford watched the ever-increasing heap at the bottom, rising conically, changing its shape every moment, as little avalanches of the sand fell away from its heightening sides.

"There is no need for you to extol its antiquity," said Eastford, with a smile. "I knew the moment I looked at it that such glasses are rare, and you are not going to find me a cheapening customer."

"So far from over-praising it," protested the shopman, "I was about to call your attention to a defect. It is useless as a measurer of time."

"It doesn't record the exact hour, then?" asked Eastford.

"Well, I suppose the truth is, they were not very particular in the old days, and time was not money, as it is now. It measures the hour with great accuracy," the curio dealer went on—"that is, if you watch it; but, strangely enough, after it has run for half an hour, or thereabouts, it stops, because of some defect in the neck of the glass, or in the pulverizing of the sand, and will not go again until the glass is shaken."

The hour-glass at that moment verified what the old man said. The tiny stream of sand suddenly ceased, but resumed its flow the moment its owner jarred the frame.

"That is very singular," said Eastford. "How do you account for it?"

"I imagine it is caused by some inequality in the grains of sand; probably a few atoms larger than the others come together at the neck, and so stop the percolation. It always does this, and, of course, I cannot remedy the matter because the glass is hermetically sealed."

"Well, I don't want it as a timekeeper, so we will not allow that defect to interfere with the sale. How much do you ask for it?"

The dealer named his price, and Eastford paid the amount.

That night in his room Bertram Eastford wrote busily until a late hour. When his work was concluded, he pushed away his manuscript with a sigh of that deep contentment which comes to a man who has not wasted his day. He replenished the open fire, drew his most comfortable arm-chair in front of it, took the green shade from his lamp, thus filling the luxurious apartment

with a light that was reflected from armour and from ancient weapons standing in corners and hung along the walls. He lifted the paper-covered package, cut the string that bound it, and placed the ancient hour-glass on his table, watching the thin stream of sand which his action had set running. The constant, unceasing, steady downfall seemed to hypnotize him. Its descent was as silent as the footsteps of time itself. Suddenly it stopped, as it had done in the shop, and its abrupt ceasing jarred on his tingling nerves like an unexpected break in the stillness. He could almost imagine an unseen hand clasping the thin cylinder of the glass and throttling it. He shook the bygone time-measurer and breathed again more steadily when the sand resumed its motion. Presently he took the glass from the table and examined it with some attention. He thought at first its frame was ebony, but further inspection convinced him it was oak, blackened with age. On one round end was carved rudely two hearts overlapping, and twined about them a pair of serpents.

There was no clue to the meaning of the hieroglyphics, and Eastford, with the glass balanced on his knee, watched the sand still running, the crimson thread sparkling in the lamplight. He fancied he saw distorted reflections of faces in the convex glass, although his reason told him they were but caricatures of his own. The great bell in the tower near by, with slow solemnity tolled twelve. He counted its measured strokes one by one, and then was startled by a decisive knock at his door. One section of his brain considered this visit untimely, another looked on it as perfectly usual, and while the two were arguing the matter out, he heard his own voice cry: "Come in."

The door opened, and the discussion between the government and the opposition in his mind ceased to consider the untimeliness of the visit, for here, in the visitor himself, stood another problem. He was a young man in military costume, his uniform being that of an officer. Eastford remembered seeing something like it on the stage, and knowing little of military affairs, thought perhaps the costume of the visitor before him indicated an officer in the Napoleonic war.

"Good evening!" said the incomer. "May I introduce myself? I am Lieutenant Sentore, of the regular army."

"You are very welcome," returned his host. "Will you be seated?"

"Thank you, no. I have but a few moments to stay. I have come for my hour-glass, if you will be good enough to let me have it."

"*Your* hour-glass?" ejaculated Eastford, in surprise. "I think you labour under a misapprehension. The glass belongs to me; I bought it to-day at the old curiosity shop in Finchmore Street."

"Rightful possession of the glass would appear to rest with you, technically; but taking you to be a gentleman, I venture to believe that a mere statement of my priority of claim will appeal to you, even though it might have no effect on the minds of a jury of our countryman."

"You mean to say that the glass has been stolen from you and has been sold?"

"It has been sold undoubtedly over and over again, but never stolen, so far as I have been able to trace its history."

"If, then, the glass has been honestly purchased by its different owners, I fail to see how you can possibly establish any claim to it."

"I have already admitted that my claim is moral rather than legal," continued the visitor. "It is a long story; have I your permission to tell it?"

"I shall be delighted to listen," replied Eastford, "but before doing so I beg to renew my invitation, and ask you to occupy this easy-chair before the fire."

¶

THE officer bowed in silence, crossed the room behind Eastford, and sat down in the arm-chair, placing his sword across his knees. The stranger spread his hands before the fire, and seemed to enjoy the comforting warmth. He remained for a few moments buried in deep reflection, quite ignoring the presence of his host, who, glancing upon the hour-glass in dispute upon his knees, and seeing that the sands had all run out, silently reversed it and set them flowing again. This action caught the corner of the stranger's eye, and brought him to a realization of why he was there. Drawing a heavy sigh, he began his story.

"In the year 1706 I held the post of lieutenant in that part of the British Army commanded by General Trelawny, the supreme command, of course, being in the hands of the great Marlborough."

Eastford listened to this announcement with a feeling that there was something wrong about the statement. The man sitting there was calmly talking of a time one hundred and ninety-two years past, and yet he himself could not be a day more than twenty-five years old. Somewhere entangled in this were the elements of absurdity. Eastford found himself unable to unravel them, but the more he thought of the matter, the more reasonable it began to appear, and so, hoping his visitor had not noted the look of surprise on his face, he said, quietly, casting his mind back over the history of England, and remembering what he had learned at school :—

" That was during the war of the Spanish Succession ? "

" Yes : the war had then been in progress four years, and many brilliant victories had been won, the greatest of which was probably the Battle of Blenheim."

" Quite so," murmured Eastford.

" It was the English," Casper cried,
" That put the French to rout ;
But what they killed each other for,
I never could make out."

The officer looked up in astonishment.

" I never heard anything like that said about the war. The reason for it was perfectly plain. We had to fight or acknowledge France to be the dictator of Europe. Still, politics have nothing to do with my story. General Trelawny and his forces were in Brabant, and were under orders to join the Duke of Marlborough's army. We were to go through the country as speedily as possible, for a great battle was expected. Trelawny's instructions were to capture certain towns and cities that lay in our way, to dismantle the fortresses, and to parole their garrisons.

" Everything went well until we came to the town of Elsengore, which we captured without the loss of a man. The capture of the town, however, was of little avail, for in the centre of it stood a strong citadel, which we tried to take by assault, but could not. General Trelawny, a very irascible, hotheaded man, but, on the whole, a just and capable officer, impatient at this unexpected delay, offered the garrison almost any terms they desired to evacuate the castle. But, having had warning of our coming, they had provisioned the place, were well supplied with ammunition, and their commander refused to make terms with General Trelawny.

" We were in no wise prepared for a long siege, nor had we expected stubborn resistance. Marching quickly, as was our custom heretofore, we possessed no heavy artillery, and so were at a disadvantage when attacking a fortress as strong as that of Elsengore. Meanwhile, General Trelawny sent mounted messengers by different roads to his chief giving an account of what had happened, explaining his delay in joining the main army, and asking for definite instructions. He expected that one or two, at least, of the mounted messengers sent away would reach his chief and be enabled to return. And that is exactly what happened, for one day a dusty horseman came to General Trelawny's headquarters with a brief note from Marlborough. The Commander-in-Chief said :

" ' I think the Frenchman's advice is good. We want the place ; therefore, take it.'

" But he sent no heavy artillery to aid us in this task, for he could not spare his big guns, expecting, as he did, an important battle. General Trelawny having his work thus cut out for him, settled down to accomplish it as best he might. He quartered officers and men in various parts of the town, the more thoroughly to keep watch on the citizens.

" It fell to my lot to be lodged in the house of Burgomaster Seidelmier, of whose conduct I have no reason to complain, for he treated me well. I was given two rooms, one a large, low apartment on the first floor, and communicating directly with the outside, by means of a hall and a separate stairway. The room was lighted by a long, many-paned window, leaded, and filled with diamond-shaped glass. Beyond this large drawing-room was my bedroom. I must say that I enjoyed my stay in Burgomaster Seidelmier's house none the less because he had an only daughter, a most charming girl. Our acquaintance ripened into deep friendship, and afterwards into—but that has nothing to do with what I have to tell you. My story is of war, and not of love. Gretlich Seidelmier presented me with the hour-glass you have in your hand, and on it I carved the joined hearts entwined with our similar initials."

" So they are initials, are they ? " said Eastford, glancing down at what he had mistaken for twining serpents.

"Yes," said the officer; "I was more accustomed to a sword than to an etching tool, and the letters are but rudely drawn. One evening, after dark, Gretlich and I were whispering together in the hall, when we heard the heavy tread of the general coming up the stair. The girl fled precipitately, and I, holding open the door, waited the approach of my chief. He entered and curtly asked me to close the door.

"'Lieutenant,' he said, 'it is my intention to capture the citadel to-night. Get together twenty-five of your men, and have them ready under the shadow of this house, but give no one a hint of what you intend to do with them. In one hour's time leave this place with your men as quietly as possible, and make an attack on the western entrance of the citadel. Your attack is to be but a feint and to draw off their forces to that point. Still, if any of your men succeed in gaining entrance to the fort they shall not lack reward and promotion. Have you a watch?'

"'Not one that will go, general; but I have an hour-glass here.'

"'Very well, set it running. Collect your men, and exactly at the hour lead them to the west front; it is but five minutes' quick march from here. An hour and five minutes from this moment I expect you to begin the attack, and the instant you are before the western gate make as much noise as your twenty-five men are capable of, so as to lead the enemy to believe that the attack is a serious one.'

"I set the hour-glass running, and went at once to call my men, stationing them where I had been ordered to place them. I returned to have a word with Gretlich before I departed on what I knew was a dangerous mission. Glancing at the hour-glass, I saw that not more than a quarter of the sand had run down during my absence. I remained in the doorway, where I could keep an eye on the hour-glass, while the girl stood leaning her arm against the angle of the dark passage-way, supporting her fair cheek on her open palm; and, standing thus in the darkness, she talked to me in whispers. We talked and talked, engaged in that sweet, endless conversation that murmurs in subdued tone round the world, being duplicated that moment at who knows how many places. Absorbed as I was in listening, at last there crept into my consciousness the fact that the sand in the upper bulb was not diminishing as fast as it should. This knowledge was fully in my mind for some time before I realized its fearful significance. Suddenly the dim knowledge took on actuality. I sprang from the door-lintel, saying:—

"'Good heavens, the sand in the hour-glass has stopped running!'

¶

"I remained there motionless, all action struck from my rigid limbs, gazing at the hour-glass on the table. Gretlich, peering in at the doorway, looking at the hour-glass and not at me, having no suspicion of the ruin involved in the stoppage of that miniature sandstorm, said, presently:—

"'Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you it does that now and then, and so you must shake the glass.'

"She bent forward as if to do this when the leaden windows shuddered, and the house itself trembled with the sharp crash of our light cannon, followed almost immediately by the deep detonation of the heavier guns from the citadel. The red sand in the glass began to fall again, and its liberation seemed to unfetter my paralyzed limbs. Bareheaded as I was, I rushed like one frantic along the passage and down the stairs. The air was resonant with the quick-following reports of the cannon, and the long, narrow street was fitfully lit up as if by sudden flashes of summer lightning. My men were still standing where I had placed them. Giving a sharp word of command, I marched them down the street and out into the square, where I met General Trelawny coming back from his futile assault. Like myself, he was bareheaded. His military countenance was begrimed with powder-smoke, but he spoke to me with no trace of anger in his voice.

"'Lieutenant Sentore,' he said, 'disperse your men.'

"I gave the word to disband my men, and then stood at attention before him.

"'Lieutenant Sentore,' he said, in the same level voice, 'return to your quarters and consider yourself under arrest. Await my coming there.'

"I turned and obeyed his orders. It seemed incredible that the sand should still be running in the hour-glass, for ages appeared to have passed over my head since last I was in that room. I paced up and

down, awaiting the coming of my chief, feeling neither fear nor regret, but rather dumb despair. In a few minutes his heavy tread was on the stair, followed by the measured tramp of a file of men. He came into the room, and with him were a sergeant and four soldiers, fully armed. The general was trembling with rage.

"'Lieutenant Sentore,' he said, 'why were you not at your post?'

"'The running sand in the hour-glass' (I hardly recognized my own voice on hearing it) 'stopped when but half exhausted. I did not notice its interruption until it was too late.'

"The general glanced grimly at the hour-glass. The last sands were falling through to the lower bulb. I saw that he did not believe my explanation.

"'It seems now to be in perfect working order,' he said, at last.

"He strode up to it and reversed it, watching the sand pour for a few moments, then he spoke abruptly:—

"'Lieutenant Sentore, your sword.'

"I handed my weapon to him without a word. Turning to the sergeant, he said: 'Lieutenant Sentore is sentenced to death. He has an hour for whatever preparations he cares to make. Allow him to dispose of that hour as he chooses, so long as he remains within this room and holds converse with no one whatever. When the last sands of this hour-glass are run, Lieutenant Sentore will stand at the other end of this room and meet the death merited by traitors, laggards, or cowards. Do you understand your duty, sergeant?'

"'Yes, general.'

"General Trelawny abruptly left the room, and we heard his heavy steps echoing throughout the silent house, and later, more faintly on the cobble-stones of the street. When they had died away a deep stillness set in, I standing alone at one end of the room, my eyes fixed on the hour-glass, and the sergeant with his four men, like statues at the other, also gazing at the same sinister object. The sergeant was the first to break the silence.

"'Lieutenant,' he said, 'do you wish to write anything——?'

"He stopped short, being an unready man rarely venturing far beyond 'Yes' and 'No.'

"'I should like to communicate with one in this household,' I said, 'but the general has forbidden it, so all I ask is that you shall have my body conveyed from this room as speedily as possible after the execution.'

"'Very good, lieutenant.'

"After that, for a long time no word was spoken. I watched my life run redly through the wasp waist of the transparent glass, then suddenly the sand ceased to flow, half in the upper bulb, half in the lower.

"'It has stopped,' said the sergeant; 'I must shake the glass.'

"'Stand where you are!' I commanded, sharply. 'Your orders do not run to that.'

"The habit of obedience rooted the sergeant to the spot.

"'Send one of your men to General Trelawny,' I said, as if I had still the right to be obeyed. 'Tell him what has happened, and ask for instructions. Let your man tread lightly as he leaves the room.'

"The sergeant did not hesitate a moment, but gave the order I required of him. The soldier nearest the door tip-toed out of the house. As we all stood there the silence seeming the deeper because of the stopping of the sand, we heard the hour toll in the nearest steeple. The sergeant was visibly perturbed, and finally he said:—

"'Lieutenant, I must obey the general's orders. An hour has passed since he left here, for that clock struck as he was going down the stair. Soldiers, make ready. *Present.*'

"The men, like impassive machines levelled their muskets at my breast. I held up my hand.

"'Sergeant,' I said as calmly as I could, 'you are now about to exceed your instructions. Give another command at your peril. The exact words of the general were, 'When the last sands of this hour-glass are run.' I call your attention to the fact that the conditions are not fulfilled. Half of the sand remains in the upper bulb.'

"The sergeant scratched his head in perplexity, but he had no desire to kill me, and was only actuated by a soldier's wish to adhere strictly to the letter of his instructions. After a few moments he muttered, 'It is true,' then gave a command that put his men into their former position.

"Probably more than half an hour passed, during which time no man moved; the sergeant and his three remaining soldiers seemed afraid to breathe; then we heard the step of the general himself on the stair.

I feared that this would give the needed impetus to the sand in the glass, but, when Trelawny entered, the *status quo* remained. The general stood looking at the suspended sand, without speaking.

" ' That is what happened before, general, and that is why I was not at my place. I have committed the crime of neglect, and have thus deservedly earned my death; but I shall die the happier if my general believes I am neither a traitor nor a coward.'

" The general, still without a word, advanced to the table, slightly shook the hour-glass, and the sand began to pour again. Then he picked the glass up in his hand, examining it minutely, as if it were some strange kind of toy. He glanced up at me and said, quite in his usual tone, as if nothing in particular had come between us :—

" ' Remarkable thing that, Sentore, isn't it ? '

" ' Very,' I answered, grimly.

" He put the glass down.

" ' Sergeant, take your men to quarters. Lieutenant Sentore, I return to you your sword; you can perhaps make better use of it alive than dead.'

" He left me without further word, and buckling on my sword, I proceeded straightway to disobey again.

" I had a great liking for General Trelawny. Knowing how he fumed and raged at being thus held helpless by an apparently impregnable fortress in the unimportant town of Elsengore, I had myself studied the citadel from all points, and had come to the conclusion that it might be successfully attempted, not by the great gates that opened on the square of the town, nor by the inferior west gates, but by scaling the seemingly unclimbable cliffs at the north side. The wall at the top of this precipice was low, and owing to the height of the beetling cliff, was inefficiently watched by one lone sentinel, who paced the battlements from corner tower to corner tower. I had made my plans, intending to ask the general's permission to risk this venture, but now I resolved to try it without his knowledge or consent, and thus retrieve, if I could, my failure of the foregoing part of the night.

" Taking with me a long, thin rope which I had in my room, anticipating such a trial for it, I roused five of my picked men, and silently we made our way to the foot of the northern cliff. Here, with the rope around my waist, I worked my way diagonally up along a cleft in the rock, which, like others parallel to it, marked the face of the precipice. A slip would be fatal. The loosening of a stone would give warning to the sentinel, whose slow steps I heard on the wall above me, but at last I reached a narrow ledge without accident, and standing up in the darkness, my chin was level with the top of the wall on which the sentry paced. The shelf between the bottom of the wall and the top of the cliff was perhaps three feet in width, and gave ample room for a man careful of his footing. Aided by the rope, the others, less expert climbers than myself, made their way to my side one by one, and the six of us stood on the ledge under the low wall.

" As the sentinel passed, we crouching in the darkness under the wall, the most agile of our party sprang up behind him. The soldier had taken off his jacket, and tip-toeing behind the sentinel, he threw the garment over his head, tightening it with a twist that almost strangled the man. Then seizing his gun so that it would not clatter on the stones, held him thus helpless while we five climbed up beside him. Feeling under the jacket, I put my right hand firmly on the sentinel's throat, and nearly choking the breath out of him, said :—

" ' Your life depends on your actions now. Will you utter a sound if I let go your throat ? '

" The man shook his head vehemently, and I released my clutch.

" ' Now,' I said to him, ' where is the powder stored ? Answer in a whisper, and speak truly.'

" ' The bulk of the powder,' he answered, ' is in the vault below the citadel.'

" ' Where is the rest of it ? ' I whispered.

" ' In the lower room of the round tower by the gate.'

" ' Nonsense,' I said : ' they would never store it in a place so liable to attack.'

" ' There was nowhere else to put it,' replied the sentinel, ' unless they left it in the open courtyard, which would be quite as unsafe.'

" ' Is the door to the lower room in the tower bolted ? '

" ' There is no door,' replied the sentry, ' but a low archway. This archway has not been closed, because no cannon-balls ever come from the northern side.'

" It was evident to me that the fellow, in his fear, spoke the truth. Now, the question was, how to get down from the

wall into the courtyard and across that to the archway at the southern side? Cautioning the sentinel again, that if he made the slightest attempt to escape or give the alarm, instant death would be meted to him, I told him to guide us to the archway, which he did, down the stone steps that led from the northern wall into the courtyard. They seemed to keep loose watch inside, the only sentinels in the place being those on the upper walls. But the man we had captured not appearing at his corner in time, his comrade on the western side became alarmed, spoke to him, and obtaining no answer, shouted to him, then discharged his gun. Instantly the place was in an uproar. Lights flashed, and from different guard-rooms soldiers poured out. I saw across the courtyard the archway the sentinel had spoken of, and calling my men made a dash for it. The besieged garrison, not expecting an enemy within, had been rushing up the stone steps at each side to the outer wall to man the cannon they had so recently quitted, and it was some minutes before a knowledge of the real state of things came to them. These few minutes were all we needed, but I saw there was no chance for a slow match, while if we fired the mine we probably would die under the tottering tower.

"By the time we reached the archway and discovered the powder barrels, the besieged, finding everything silent outside, came to a realization of the true condition of affairs. We faced them with bayonets fixed, while Sept, the man who had captured the sentinel, took the hatchet he had brought with him at his girdle, flung over one of the barrels on its side, and knocked in the head of it, allowing the dull black powder to pour on the cobblestones. Then filling his hat with the explosive, he came out towards us, leaving a thick trail behind him. By this time we were sorely beset, and one of our men had gone down under the fire of the enemy, who shot wildly, being baffled by the darkness, otherwise all of us had been slaughtered. I seized a musket from a comrade and shouted to the rest:—

"'Save yourselves,' and to the garrison, in French, I gave the same warning; then I fired the musket into the train of powder, and the next instant found myself half stunned and bleeding at the farther end of the courtyard. The roar of the explosion and the crash of the falling tower were deafening. All Elsengore was aroused by the earthquake shock. I called to my men when I could find my voice, and Sept answered from one side, and two more from another. Together we tottered across the *debris*-strewn courtyard. Some woodwork inside the citadel had taken fire and was burning fiercely, and this lit up the ruins and made visible the great gap in the wall at the fallen gate. Into the square below we saw the whole town pouring, soldiers and civilians alike coming from the narrow streets into the open quadrangle. I made my way, leaning heavily on Sept, over the broken gate and down the causeway into the square, and there, foremost of all, met my general.

"'There, general,' I gasped, 'there is your citadel, and through this gap can we march to meet Marlborough.'

"'Pray, sir, who the deuce are you?' cried the general, for my face was like that of a blackamoor.

"'I am the lieutenant who has once more disobeyed your orders, general, in the hope of retrieving a former mistake.'

"'Sentore!' he cried, rapping out an oath. 'I shall have you court-martialled.'

"'I think, general,' I said, 'that I am court-martialled already,' for I thought then that the hand of death was upon me, which shows the effect of imagination, for my wounds were not serious, yet I sank down unconscious at the general's feet.

"Seven years later, when the war ended, I got leave of absence and came back to Elsengore for Gretlich Seidelmier and the hour-glass."

As the lieutenant ceased speaking, Eastford thought he heard again the explosion under the tower, and started to his feet in nervous alarm, then looked at the lieutenant and laughed, while he said:—

"Lieutenant, I was startled by that noise just now, and imagined for the moment that I was in Brabant. You have made good your claim to the hour-glass, and you are welcome to it."

But as Eastford spoke, he turned his eyes towards the chair in which the lieutenant had been seated, and found it vacant. Gazing round the room, in half somnolent dismay, he saw that he was indeed alone. At his feet was the shattered hour-glass, which had fallen from his knee, its blood-red sand mingling with the colours on the carpet. Eastford said, with an air of surprise:—

"By Jove!"

Inns and Taverns

Where You May Do As You Please.

THERE is no private house (said he) in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests, the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house, as if it were his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome; and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.

Samuel Johnson.

An English Inn.

A JOLLY, stout, red-faced host led the way into a cool wainscoted parlour, where the dark oak gleamed with much polishing, and a great jug of honeysuckle stood in the empty grate. Friend and Mr. Morgan threw themselves, one into a cushioned arm-chair, the other on the high-backed oaken settle by the fireplace, while Will seated himself near the open window and enjoyed the scent of the roses which climbed around it. The prettiest possible serving-maid, with tight trim waist and short skirts showing her neat ankles, shook out a snowy cloth and began laying the table for supper, shedding knives and forks into their places with marvellous dexterity, and tripping in and out of the room with a gait as dainty as a water-wagtail's.

Mrs. R. J. Garnett.

Headquarters of the Village Gossips.

IN one of my visits to the village with Master Simon, he proposed that we should stop at the inn, which he wished to show me, as a specimen of a real country inn, the headquarters of village gossip. I had remarked it before, in my perambulations about the place. It has a deep, old-fashioned porch, leading into a large hall, which serves for tap-room and traveller's room; having a wide fireplace, with high-backed settles on each side, where the wise men of the village gossip over their ale, and hold their sessions during the long winter evenings. The landlord is an easy, indolent fellow, shaped a little like one of his own beer barrels, and is apt to stand gossiping at his door, with his wig on one side, and his hands in his pockets, whilst his wife and daughter attend to customers. His wife, however, is fully competent to manage the establishment; and indeed from long habitude, rules over all the frequenters of the tap-room as completely as if they were her dependants instead of her patrons.

Washington Irving.

Repainting the Ancient Sign.

THE travelling sign-painter who was re-painting the sign of the "Cauliflower" was enjoying a well-earned respite from his labours. On the old table under the shade of the elms mammoth sandwiches and a large slice of cheese waited in an untied handkerchief until such time as his thirst should be satisfied. At the other side of the table the oldest man in Claybury, drawing gently at a long clay pipe turned a dim and regretful eye up at the old sign-board.

"I've drunk my beer under it for pretty near seventy years," he said, with a sigh. "It's a pity it couldn't ha' lasted my time."

The painter, slowly pushing a wedge of sandwich into his mouth, regarded him indulgently.

"It's all through two young gentlemen as was passing through 'ere a month or two ago," continued the old man; "they told Smith the landlord, they'd been looking all over the place for the 'Cauliflower,' and when Smith showed 'em the sign they said they thought it was the 'George the Fourth,' and a very good likeness, too."

The painter laughed and took another look at the old sign; then with the nervousness of the true artist he took a look at his own. One or two shadows——

He flung his legs over the bench and took up his brushes. In ten minutes the most fervent loyalist would have looked in vain for any resemblance, and with a sigh at the pitfalls which beset the artist he returned to his interrupted meal and hailed the house for more beer.

"There's nobody could mistake your sign for anything but a cauliflower," said the old man, "it looks good enough to eat."

W. W. Jacobs.

TO thee, fair freedom! I retire
From flattery, cards, and dice, and din;
Nor art thou found in mansions higher
Than the low cot, or humble inn.

'Tis here with boundless power I reign;
And every health which I begin,
Converts dull port to bright champagne;
Such freedom crowns it, at an inn.

I fly from pomp, I fly from plate!
I fly from falsehood's specious grin!
Freedom I love, and form I hate,
And choose my lodgings at an inn.

Here, waiter! take my sordid ore,
Which lackeys else might hope to win;
It buys, what courts have not in store;
It buys me freedom at an inn.

Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.

William Shenstone.

Where Literary Lions Fed.

I OFTEN dined at the "Cheshire Cheese." Johnson and his friends, I was informed, used to do the same, and I was told I should see individuals who had met them there. This I found to be correct. The company was more select than in later times, but there are Fleet Street tradesmen who well remember both Johnson and Goldsmith in this place of entertainment.

Cyrus Redding.

A Pleasant Topic for a Journey.

I GRANT there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavour of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!" These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea, "the cups that cheer, but not inebriate," and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet!

WILLIAM HAZLITT.

YE men of wit and wealth, while all this sneering
'Gainst poor excisemen? give the cause a hearing;
What are your landlord's rent-rolls?—taxing ledgers;
What premiers? What even monarchs?—mighty gaugers;
Nay, what are priests, those seeming-godly wisemen,
What are they, pray, but spiritual excisemen?

ROBERT BURNS.

The Inn of Gentility.

THE worthy landlady made her appearance with the politest of bows and an apology—for what does the reader think a lady should apologize in the most lonely rude spot in the world?—because a plain servant woman was about to bring in the dinner, the waiter being absent on leave at Coleraine! O heaven and earth! where will the genteel end? I replied philosophically, that I did not care twopence for the plainness or beauty of the waiter, but that it was the dinner that I looked to, the frying whereof made a great noise in the huge lonely house; and it must be said that though the lady *was* plain, the repast was exceedingly good. "I have expended my little all," says the landlady, stepping in with a speech after dinner, "in the building of this establishment, and though to a man its profits may appear small to such a *being* as I am, it will bring, I trust, a sufficient return," and on my asking her why she took the place, she replied that she had always, from her earliest youth, a fancy to dwell in that spot, and had according realised her wish by building this hotel—this mausoleum. In spite of the bright fire, and the good dinner, and the good wine, it was impossible to feel comfortable in the place; and when the car-wheels were heard, I jumped up with joy to take my departure and forget the awful lonely shore, that wild, dismal, genteel inn.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

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A Brilliant New Three-Part Novel

Black Roses

A vivid and picturesque romance of Neapolitan life

By FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG

PART I

WHEN the transatlantic tourist-liner swayed to her moorings alongside the quay at Naples a moonless summer night had fallen. For ten days, turbines had driven her throbbing hull without the respite of a revolution across the Western Ocean; and already her two hundred passengers, each certified first-class, compelled, like castaways on some uninhabited atoll, to accept the isolations and congregations of the sea, had settled down into a microcosmic society divided into strata that marked their social and financial differences, their tastes and their distastes.

Throughout the voyage Paolo Ricci had passed for a lonely and alien figure. The agents in New York had given him, as the due of his distinction, a place at the captain's table; and the passengers, with the idle curiosity of sea-travellers, had soon identified him as Ricci, *the* Ricci, the fashionable portrait painter. Grey-bearded, dapper, correct, carrying in his neat severity the air of a diplomat rather than that of an artist, he had steered his way silently, courteously, through the *Trinacria's* Gargantuan bills of fare. At meal-times his companions and the captain, who had an American sailor's tactful appreciation of his social duties, had tried to draw him into the pleasant inanities that pass for conversation in a liner's saloon. His nearest neighbour, Mrs. Blumenfeld, of Pittsburgh, had even hoped that, under the persuasions of this charming intimacy, he might be induced to do a charcoal drawing, a mere sketch, of her daughter, Eugenia, as a reminiscence of their voyage together; but her casual mention of her husband's millions had not produced the flutter of an eyelid, her advances had flattened themselves harmlessly and ineffectively against the armour of his admirable manners, while her daughter's languishing appreciations of Atlantic sunsets had moved him to nothing but a bow and an adjustment of his rimless pince-nez. *Farouche* was the word which Eugenia, who had been educated in Paris, applied to him. "I'm sure I don't know what that means," her mother agreed, "but don't forget, my dear, that this Mr. Ricci is, after all, a dago. A true American would have shown more respect to your papa's name."

So Eugenia acquiesced, veiling, enchantingly, her lustrous olive-shaped eyes; and after the first few days the Blumenfelds left him alone. Even the captain left him alone. Signor Ricci was not, in the current phrase, a good mixer. He did not play cards. He declined, politely, to drink cocktails or champagne. The sweepstake on the day's run left him unmoved. He was, most definitely, a foreigner. "It's a pity," Mrs. Blumenfeld complained, "that a man like that doesn't travel on one of the Italian ships, where he wouldn't be so conspicuous. Thank heaven I expect he'll be leaving us at Naples, and we may get someone more chummy in his place as far as Alexandria." The Blumenfelds were going on to Egypt to see the Pyramids, and up the Nile to Assuan. In one of his unfortunately expansive moments Signor Ricci had asked her if she were going to visit the Holy Land, which was indelicate. "I am," he confessed to her, hurriedly covering his mistake.

Yet, when the gangways went down at Naples, and all the passengers, unsuitably dressed, began to flock ashore, calling to each other with high-pitched, bewildered voices, above the thunderous exhausts of taxi-cabs that waited to transfer them as ruinously and as swiftly as possible to Cook's funicular, which trailed like a yellow string of diamonds on the volcano's cone, Paolo Ricci, in his dark cloak—the only concession which this precise man of sixty made to the obviously artistic—seemed as remote and lonely as ever. Under the swinging arc-lamps the tourists swarmed ashore, their white and eager faces turned

backward toward the *Trinacria's* bejewelled carcase. Ricci stood by the rail and watched them disappear into the mass of darkness that marked the customs-house; he saw their cars swirl desperately down the sombre length of roadway that faced the dock, where the long trams went crawling, clanking past the unimaginable squalor of sailors' drinking-dens.

Long after they had gone he still stood staring shoreward. On the main deck only a few elderly ladies, too staid for nocturnal adventure, were left. They sat in their deck-chairs with rugs tucked round their modest feet, drinking in the romantic qualities of the Italian night without reserve. Among them, vendors of tortoiseshell circled greedily, settling on their possible victims again and again with the persistence of teasing flies. One of them waylaid him in the accents of Newhaven Connecticut: "Wanabuy a mandolin, all hand-made? Say, mister, beautiful cameos, very cheap."

He refused, with an instinctive tilt of the head, a flicker of the left hand, more expressive than words. The gesture was Neapolitan. The hawker fell behind him, and Ricci passed moodily to the companion that led to the boat deck. He climbed it. The deck was empty. Forward, the block of the officers' quarters showed squares of curtained light beneath the white ghost of the bridge. Above, in a velvety darkness, the cylinders of the *Trinacria's* raked funnels loomed enormously. Nothing but the spidery tracery of her still wireless-aerials hung between him and the stars. Soft, southern starlight; lonely, mysterious. Too lonely, too mysterious for Paolo Ricci, he thought. Mysterious, too, were the lights of Naples, a swarm of fireflies suspended among her invisible hills, a flight of fireflies, blown eastward along the volcanic shore to Torre del Greco, Torre Annunziata, Pompeii, Castellamare—names lovely in themselves, waking tempestuous memories. Memories too tempestuous—memories of youth; he was half-afraid of them; his soul was carried away with them, further than he dared to release it.

Resolutely he turned his back upon this beauty. His eyes, brought westward, probed the unlighted mass of ancient houses that cluster around the port. Above these, a single cupola, sheathed in green glazed tiles, imprisoned some vagrant gleams, of starlight maybe, within its lustre. "Il Carmine," he heard himself murmur. The Carmine, old and scabrous as ever; he had not set eyes on it for more than forty years. Beneath that cupola, somewhere in the darkness, he remembered, there lay a square. Out of the square, between houses so old and steep and rotten that they seemed to lean towards each other for support, ran a narrow lane—the *Vicolo de Angelis*. "Angel land . . . Angels in hell," he thought. The old Paolo would never have thought like that!

Half-way down the Vicolo, on the left, an arched aperture in the house walls admitted one to a courtyard that was like a well. So deep, so dark, so dank. He could smell it even now. And though he turned away along the deck his thoughts still escaped him, as though they were determined to act of themselves. Within the courtyard, on the right, a wide door opened on to marble stairs. Echoing marble. Marble was cheap enough in those days. Wide, echoing marble that narrowed as one ascended. Ninety-two, ninety-three, ninety-four. The ninety-fifth was a landing, and on it a closed door. He might knock and wait for ever; the door would never open. Forty-five years. . . .

Paolo Ricci sat down heavily on a bench made gritty by the smuts from the *Trinacria's* funnels. He put his hands to his eyes. But still he could see the locked door that would never, never open. He remembered. . . .

¶

HE remembered the days of his childhood, fifty, more than fifty, years ago. He saw himself as a little mop-headed boy in the village that had bred him, Pogerola, ledged like a raven's nest upon the face of the Neapolitan Appenine. A sad, savage place, the people in the valleys thought it. You might judge how wild it was by the wooden bolts, as thick as a man's thigh, upon the house doors, the flayed skins of grey wolves nailed inside them. Four times a week a muddy or dusty diligence toiled upwards over tracks stony or torrents of grey ice-water to the little *piazza* edged with mutilated plane-trees. On one side the square was open, commanding an immensity of tumbled plain, the haunt of cloud shadows slowly moving like giant flocks at pasture. On the three others stood the ragged town-hall, from whose lintel the Bourbon arms had never been obliterated; the inn, with its shiny benches

of chestnut warped by sleet and bitter sun; and the pharmacy, kept by Andrea, Paolo Ricci's father.

With the exception of the Conte Ruffo, a mean little absentee landlord, who sustained in Naples the decadent shadow of a name that had long ceased to be illustrious, Paolo's father was the most considerable man in Pogerola, for, in Southern Italy, the chemist's shop is more than a place where medicines are dispensed. It was the village club, the centre of its political activities and dissensions. Paolo could see it now—a long constricted chamber with folding doors that, except in winter, were always open; the narrow counter, the brass balances scoured with charcoal ashes to the smoothness of a worn coin; the drawers of medicaments, with gilt inscriptions toned by successive coats of dirt and varnish to the hues of ancient pictures; the phials of old glass, enclosing syrups and tinctures of a ravishing brilliance; the long bench, crowded with village politicians in hunting suits of green corduroy and thonged goat-skin shoes and, before them, always black-coated and professional, that vivid, grey, round-headed man, his father, endlessly expounding his violent political loves and hatreds. Paolo used to sit there of an evening, his black mop hidden behind the counter, listening to a hubbub of talk.

He sat and listened; and behind him, in the shadow of the unlighted room in which the family ate their beans and maccheroni, sat his mother, Concetta as all the village knew her. She was a peasant of the mountains, and never pretended to be anything else. She did not try to understand her husband's politics. All day she sat and span and cooked and slaved for Paolo and her husband. It was she who scrubbed the brass scales to their fine lustre, who swept and scrubbed the red-tiled floor clean of spittle and cigar-ends. By sunset her fourteen-hour day was ended. She sat there, somnolent, like a Moslem behind her purdah, night after night, her wide skirts distended over the smouldering charcoal brazier that warmed her body and soul from below upward; fine carbonelle of charred brushwood from the baker's ovens. She never spoke; yet Paolo always knew that she was sitting there behind him, a large, spare woman, with marvellous dark eyes and a beauty of skin that had withered prematurely, as such precocious growths will wither, into a brown flaccidity. Paolo, eagerly listening, hoped she was asleep. But Concetta never slept out of her time; and when the cracked bell of the parish church tolled eight, so hesitatingly that each stroke seemed likely to be the last, she would murmur the two words "Paolo" and "bed," and he would steal obediently away into the darkness, leaving the *pezzi grossi*, the big bugs, to their talk.

A proud, a violent, a stubborn race, these Samnite peasants. Even now it was remembered among them that they had nearly broken Rome. From his hiding-place behind the counter Paolo heard strange stories of death and violence, vendetta and brigandage. These hunters, with their long-barrelled flintlocks would shoot at sight if their possessions were in question. Theirs was an old world, cynical, and incredulous of the new united Italy. When they spoke of money they still calculated their sums in Bourbon ducats. And they spoke much of money. Paolo's father, that grizzled, vivid man, with his bristling moustaches and quick, fierce gestures, thought of little else. Even behind his political ardours the thought of money smouldered. And, with the thought of money, that of the little Paolo, his only son, had gradually become synonymous.

It was for him, though Paolo did not know it, that his father hoarded gold and silver coins in the box beneath the loose tile under his bed. Sometimes, behind the curtain that was slung between them, Paolo would hear him counting it in the middle of the night. It was for him that the old man drove his flinty bargains, accumulating land, strip by strip, upon the sun-baked terraces; here a patch of vines, a group of twisted olives there. Money and power. For himself he could not use them. Such gnarled, wind-writhen trees cannot suffer transplantation. Even if he were a king among peasants he was still a peasant, deep-rooted in the fierce, thirsty soil. Slowly, with infinite care and sacrifice, he had reached his present station. He clung there, grimly consolidating his forces. The next step was Paolo's, his son's.

The next step, naturally, was that Paolo should become a doctor. Not that Andrea had any more respect for medicine than for incantations. He was a better doctor himself than many who could write their titles on a plate, and knew it. A poor doctor, in his opinion, was in a worse case than many

a rich chemist. But Paolo would not be poor, and Paolo, instructed in his own hard shrewdness, would have the advantage of half the students in the University of Naples. When Paolo had taken his degree he would be able to wait, to choose his type of practice without a thought of maccheroni; to establish himself in the independence of a city practitioner of the highest class, returning yearly to Pogerola in an aura of celebrity to collect his rents; to found a family; to show the miserable Conte Ruffo what the Riccis were made of.

¶

IN his tenth year, when the boys with whom he played on the piazza were already doing man's labours with their mattocks in the fields or cutting chestnut pales for vines upon the upper slopes, Paolo's father handed him over to the educational care of one of the Pogerola priests. His action threw the elders of the pharmacy into a ferment, for most of them were fiercely anti-clerical. Andrea was touching this accursed thing.

"Remember," they said, "the priests will teach him their roguery; a young tree is easily bent."

Don Ambrogio, the priest to whom Andrea confided Paolo's education, was a frail, doddering creature of more than eighty years. For long enough he had been too feeble to take an active part in parochial work; but partly out of pity for his age and weakness, and partly because his life was, of necessity, not irregular, and his ears very deaf, the village girls were not afraid to confess to him, and their parents kept him alive with small payments for masses and the benediction of their houses at Easter. Also he kept the reputation of having once been learned. This was one reason why Andrea had chosen him; a second was the fact that Don Ambrogio suffered, in winter, from chronic bronchitis, and that the fees for Paolo's instruction could be taken out in bottles of cough-linctus.

The linctus was cheap, and Andrea often laughed over his bargain; but it is doubtful, even so, if Paolo got his money's worth; for, having taken the linctus, Don Ambrogio would often nod asleep in the sun, diffused by the cobwebby window. Sometimes, too, in the middle of a Latin lesson, he would lose the thread of what he was saying.

For all that, Don Ambrogio earned his linctus with a certain amount of Latin, and many hours of Dante, with whose works he was more familiar than with any Latin but that of the Breviary. Paolo was quick; sometimes, indeed, he went too fast for his teacher; and when Don Ambrogio, tired of Virgil in Purgatory, fell asleep in his chair, Paolo would draw him as he sat, with the sticks of charcoal which, by this time, he had begun to smuggle from his mother's kitchen. The fine pallor of the old man's features, fixed in repose as in death, his white hair trailing over the black collar of his soutane, gave to a carbon drawing, the opportunity of completeness. He drew that sallow, wasted face again and again, until he felt as satisfied with his presentation as an artist can ever feel; he carried his sketches home in secret and gazed on them with love. But he did not dare to tell anyone about them: not even his mother.

Now, in his twelfth year, the itch to draw would never leave him. He suppressed and cultivated it like a secret vice. Its practice was, of necessity, furtive and dangerous; for its materials were scarce and must always be stolen. Charcoal, indeed, was plentiful enough. Down from the woods above Pogerola came pack-mules laden with it; but paper, and even printed paper was a rarity in those days, so that all Paolo's life developed into a restless search for blank plane surfaces. He drew in his father's books, not only on the chaste end-pages, but over the text of the Pharmacopœa, which Andrea knew by heart and had ceased to consult for many years; he drew on walls, on distant walls for preference; he drew in the dust that lay on Don Ambrogio's window-sill, in the smooth beds of finely-sifted soil that the peasants spread to receive the olives shaken down in Autumn; he drew in the early morning, before his father had stirred; he drew in the dark, when only his muscles told him what he was drawing.

In every conscious moment he was obsessed by the form of things seen or remembered; by lines of mountain, contorted olive trunks, mysterious masses of stone and mortar that hammered at his brain until he had tried to express them. All colour, too, inflamed him, as well it might in an air of such a dazzling dry clarity as that of Pogerola; but in the presentation of colours his hands were

impotent, though his greedy mind absorbed and classified and held them fast in their finest variations.

These passions so engrossed him that, in the end, his abstraction made him pass in the village for a fool. The people shook their heads over him; but the subject was so delicate, and his father's hopes so high, that none of the cronies in the pharmacy dared to mention it. Triumphantly, and naturally, they put it down to Latin.

Andrea was in no hurry. In his heart he was satisfied that Paolo was sharp enough to hold his own when serious work began; in the meantime, he took the boy into his shop and made him generally familiar with the mechanical processes of the chemist's art, the making of tinctures and infusions, the smoothing of emulsions, the rolling of pills.

¶

ON summer evenings, when in the hush between the songs of cicala and grillo the sun-drenched countryside released an odorous and tepid air, Paolo would leave the pharmacy, where the cronies were already assembled, and set out eastward along the softened line of the hills. This was the season of lovers, for the light faded late. The girls would walk together, arm in arm, with provocative, lowered voices and soft bursts of laughter. The boys would strut behind them, swaggering with loud bold talk that was meant to be heard. Their voices echoed gaily as the dusk received them. And Paolo was troubled by these sounds; for now he was over sixteen, and they suggested to him the promise of a warm, indefinite content of soul that was comparable to the breath of tepid evening air upon his cheeks. It made his skin flush and tingle, his heart beat faster; it was the physical counterpart of the emotion with which sudden revelations of beauty in form and colour affected him.

But though he longed to draw nearer to the source of these strange ecstasies, the careful seclusion that Andrea's plans imposed on him made the first steps impossible. He was different from the other boys of his age who knew already the gay companionships of the fields. He couldn't laugh and joke and swagger as they did. All the emotions that he knew were so closed and secret that he had never dared to release them in words. It was easier for him to draw than to speak, and when he came near to them the girls seemed aware of his strangeness; they looked at him with shy side-glances, as though they were frightened by the pre-occupation of his serious eyes; they would whisper, and laugh, and steal away from him. Their difference took the softness out of his longing and turned it into a feeling of frustration, almost of hatred.

One evening, as he climbed the mountain in search of a pocket of plastic clay that he had discovered, he saw across the rose of sunset the figure of a girl approaching. So slowly she came, with such an exquisite balance, with such a live and lovely motion, that Paolo held his breath.

He knew her well by name—a girl of his own age, Annina, the daughter of one of the cronies of the pharmacy; but this was not the Annina that he knew. She was a rose, a flame; her body a vessel of transcendent workmanship enchalicing not human blood but light. He could have cried aloud for joy of the colour that was in her, of the form that enclosed it. Her blue-green shadow thrown on cold, lilac limestone was as lovely as her substance.

As soon as she recognised him she stopped and smiled and called him by his name. She eased her burden and sat down at the path-side with a sigh. Paolo came and sat beside her. Rich light enveloped them. Her neck was bare and smooth as rose-tinted alabaster; perfect as cold alabaster, yet, when she breathed, warm and alive. She seemed content to sit with him there, without shyness; her brown eyes were not afraid of him; she was placid in the richness of light and life that was in her, so gentle that Paolo longed, and was afraid, to touch her.

"Well, Paolino?" she said.

Suddenly he grew bold. "Annina, I never knew that you were so beautiful."

She laughed softly.

"Why, is that all?" she said.

All? It was nothing! He struggled with words that became formless and shrivelled away in the light of her puzzled eyes. At last the truth burst from him. "In this moment you don't seem to me a girl at all."

She surveyed him with bewildered disapproval as he plunged onward.

"You're so beautiful that I daren't even touch you. Annina, you're so lovely that I wish you could stay for ever like that."

She smiled and was softened. " Not a girl, but an angel out of heaven. Someday . . ." He paused, but now she was eager to hear the rest.

" Some day—what, Paolino ? " she mocked him.

" I shall remember it all my life," he told her. " Some day I'd like to paint you ! "

" To paint me ! What do you take me for, Paolino ? I should think that's the first time a girl of Pogerola has had a thing like that said to her, upon my word ! "

" Annina, you don't understand," he was calling helplessly. " Annina, I love you, I adore you ! "

" Well, that's a funny way of saying it," she mocked him, talking straight in front of her and hurrying away. He had offended her. His clumsiness offered no remedy; for though she checked her pace to listen to him, she would only answer with scornful proverbs.

" Why do you follow me like a goat ? " she said angrily at last. " Do you want the whole village to see us ? The mountain's one thing, but the village is another. Do you want me to lose my name ? "

Wretchedly, he fell behind. Annina walked on into the last of the sunset. The light failed; the face of the mountain faded to an eerie greyness of lavender, and with it the magic faded from Annina's retreating figure. She became once more an ordinary girl of the village, swaying home at dusk with a bundle of brushwood on her head.

¶

NEXT Sunday night on the long lover's road, Annina provocatively swept by him, her arms linked with those of her girl companions, and all Paolo's heart came into his throat when he saw her; for though he had decided to hate her, nothing could force him to forget the moments of transfiguration which the swing of her walk recalled. As soon as she was past him he heard whispers and laughter. He guessed what she was saying, and knew for certain he had guessed rightly when, later, one of the girls who had been walking with her threw to him, over her shoulder: " Paolino, would you like to paint me ? "

Out of Annina's malicious indiscretion the joke spread further. Soon the boys had it, too. They called him " O pittore," the painter, and the word stuck like paint, for those people lived by nicknames, and the length of a man's nose might ticket his grandchildren for life. It was the name above all others that Paolo would have wished to deserve; yet here, in Pogerola, it became an insult on every tongue that spoke it.

The story came at last to Andrea's ears. One of his cronies, Annina's uncle, told it with fat wheezings of laughter. They all laughed with him, for it wasn't often that they had the chance to do so at the chemist's expense.

As soon as the club had dispersed Andrea went in search of his son. He hauled Paolo from his mattress by one arm and thrashed him with his fists and with a dried cow's tail that he kept for the purpose. Paolo was taller than he and wiry for his years; but his father was like a small grey fury; the anger that had smouldered under the taunts of his cronies leapt up and consumed him. If Paolo's mother, stumbling out of bed, had not flown to his rescue and flung herself on her husband from behind, there might have been murder; for Andrea's violence, once released, gathered strength like a spinning tornado and whirled his brain away with it.

When he had finished, his fury had battered him as much as the unfortunate Paolo. He flung the boy away from him. Behind the curtain Paolo heard him panting and cursing as he stripped to the shirt in which he slept. Suddenly the oil-wick went out and there was silence, for Paolo's mother dared not speak a word. Once before she had saved Andrea from his violence, and shame had made him hate her for it. Hour after hour Paolo heard his father tossing on his bed behind the curtain like a restless animal. In every matter of ordinary life Andrea despised his wife's opinion, and let her know it, yet always in distress he consulted her, if only for the fierce pleasure of violently disputing the opinions for which he had asked if they didn't fall in with his own. So, in the middle of the night, Paolo heard him speaking:

" Concetta, are you awake ? "

" How could I sleep ? " she answered.

" Did you hear what Antonio was saying of our son ? "

" He's a child, Andrea."

"A child ! " he snorted. " Have you no brains to understand ? Of course not. Whatever the boy had done you'd stand up for him. Obstinate as an animal ! " Like an obstinate animal she kept silence. " It's

nothing to you that he's made a fool of me, your husband."

"Nobody can make a fool of you, Andrea, except yourself," she answered slowly. "Don't speak to me of animals. You yourself have behaved like one."

"Cretin!" Andrea was muttering. "Here is this boy, whose future I've planned, a son that I wish to be proud of, not only behaving like an idiot for all Pogerola to laugh at, but giving out behind my back—behind my back!—that . . . in effect, that I'm a fool for my pains. Says that he'll be a painter!"

"He must be what God makes him, Andrea."

"God? If your God makes him a painter he'll have made him a beggar as well. Remember that, Concetta, and tell him so from me."

"Now you are talking nonsense," she answered calmly. "There is no reason why Paolo should be a beggar. We are not poor people. There is the land to live on."

"The land!" Andrea laughed bitterly. "I see that nothing can change you. As long as you live, Concetta, you'll have no idea in your head beyond crops of grain and olives. If you had your will you'd make a peasant of him."

"Like your father and my father before him. What's wrong with that? They were good, honest men, both of them, and happier than you, Andrea. What will be, will be, and there's an end of it; and if Paolino wants to be a painter, why, what's the difference of that from any other trade?"

"I'll tell you, I'll tell you," Andrea cried excitedly. "If ever you'd been to Naples, as I have, you'd know. Beggars and painters, there's little to choose between them. How do they sell their pictures? Just like beggars, Concetta. Standing in rags at the street corners, trying to catch the fools of foreigners. Daubs of Vesuvius with red fire coming out of it; pictures of naked women that you'd be ashamed to set eyes on. What is the life they lead?"

"Paolino's a good boy; I'd trust him," she answered fondly. But Paolo knew from her voice that she was troubled.

"Then you're a bigger fool than I took you for," Andrea snorted. "Devil take the ignorance of women, they've no more sense than pack-mules!"

"Turn over, my little one, and try to go to sleep. The parroco's cock is crowing," Concetta answered gently.

And he obeyed. Paolo heard the creaking and commotion as the fiery little man lurched over; his heart was warm with gratitude for his mother's gentleness and understanding. There was a steadfastness in her simplicity that calmed his heart and took the pain out of his battered limbs. She trusted him.

But still Andrea would not sleep. His ceaseless tossing kept Paolo awake until the hour before dawn, with its impatient clanging from the church's bell-tower. Then suddenly his father started up in bed.

"I've said that he shall be a doctor," he cried, "and I'll see myself dead and damned before he takes to painting! Do you hear me, Concetta? Do you hear?"

And by the sleepy whispers that followed Paolo knew that his mother had taken Andrea in her arms.

¶

THERE might almost have been something impious and prophetic in that final challenge. One evening, a week later, when Concetta returned as usual from their vineyards, powdered, as a rich bee smothered in pollen, with the sulphur that peasants use to dust their vines, and called to her husband from the open doorway, he did not answer her. She called again; but instinct told her that this was no ordinary silence. Terrified, she hurried in behind the counter, and stumbled, in the dark, over a figure huddled like a sack upon the floor.

It was Andrea. He lay where he had pitched over from his chair, face downward like a child asleep, his legs bunched up, one arm outstretched with clenched fingers, as though he were shaking his fist at heaven. She ran to the door of the shop and cried out for help. The little square had not yet awakened from its afternoon drowsiness. Only under the languid plane trees a couple of dogs lay yawning, with paws stretched out in front of them. Then the bent figure of Don Ambrogio came doddering round the corner. She called him by name: "Father, come quickly!" But the old priest was so deaf that he only wavered for an instant, as though something incomprehensible had momentarily troubled the calm of his senses.

Concetta ran out and caught him by the arm so violently that the poor old thing was almost overbalanced.

" It's Andrea, my husband ! " she said. " I think something terrible has happened."

" Eh ? " said Don Ambrogio. "Paolino ? No, my daughter, I haven't seen him."

She dragged the old man into the shop and behind the counter. He bent and touched Andrea. He rose and crossed himself. " Peace to his soul," he murmured. " Certainly it is finished. Courage, my daughter, courage ! "

In a few minutes the darkness of the little shop was full of indistinct figures and whisperings. The parroco and another priest were there ; Annina's father ; enemies and friends co-mingled and reconciled in the stir of this strange excitement.

The parroco shook his head : " God has struck him suddenly. That is how atheists die." He picked up his skirts about him and swept away. Of the black-robed only Don Ambrogio remained.

When Paolo came home dreaming through the dusk he found the doors closed. He could not understand until he heard the women wailing upstairs and pushed his way through the hushed crowd in the kitchen to find his mother.

" Concetta, Concetta," hey called, " here is your son ! "

She looked at him wildly, as though he were a stranger.

¶

FOR all his unbelief they buried Andrea under the cypresses of the *Campo Santo*. It could not be otherwise, for in Pogerola there was no accommodation for heretics, and the church could not affirm that his last moments had lacked the grace of repentance, even though the manner of his end had been appropriate.

For a whole week, according to custom, no fire burned in the Riccis's charcoal furnace. The neighbours brought Paolo and his mother dishes ready cooked, roasted barley coffee made with goat's milk, and baskets of fruit.

What they really wanted to know, one and all, was how much Andrea had left and whether his documents were in order ; for since he had acquired money Andrea had taken to lending it to small landowners whom he trusted, and many hoped that, in the unexpectedness of the catastrophe, these loans would be forgotten or evidence of them mislaid ; but Concetta, even in her desolation, never lost her peasant shrewdness nor gave a word away.

Slowly, methodically, with the devoted patience of ants whose world has been destroyed, she sat there, silently collecting the fragments of her life, so quiet, so serene, that it was only in her wounded eyes, as in those of a bereaved animal, that her misery could be seen. Of the future she said nothing ; not even to Paolo did she breathe one word of what she was planning. But when the notary had found a purchaser for Andrea's business and the new chemist had haggled and paid his price, they moved westward along the hillside to a cottage that had come to her from her father.

Fortunately she had realised that Paolo's creative passion was a thing outside the province of her understanding, and that, whatever else it might lead to, it unfitted him for the peasant's life to which they had returned. Andrea, with his educational schemes, was partly responsible for that ; but she knew that she couldn't solve the difficulties that he had created by violence or repression as he had tried to do, and all her love for Paolo, made more emotional by their disaster, urged her to sacrifice herself to his happiness. So both of them waited without speaking ; and this rich season of peace and suspension in which the grape-clusters swelled and tarnished, and olives blackened into ripeness, seemed to Paolo symbolical of their maturing purpose.

Suddenly came thunder and rain that refreshed and awakened them. Autumn, in Pogerola, was like a second spring. The sun-cracked terraces livened into new leaf, and dawns were sweet with the songs of returning migrants, notes cool and liquid, falling like dew upon the dry chafing of the cicalas. Paolo and his mother stripped the vines and pulped the clusters ; the cottage was full of the slumberous smell of must. No time for thought in these days ; for next came the olives, bulging baskets with their jet, basket after basket to be carried down the slope to the mill in Pogerola, and Concetta, like a young girl, singing with the other women as she went, with the sun's tyranny past, and the joy of harvest in her eyes.

An old man, Alessandro, came from Naples to make them an offer for their oil ; a shrewd, wrinkled fellow, with young eyes, golden, like Annina's. For twenty years he had come to drive his bargains with Andrea, always young and smiling, and Concetta respected him because he was

rich and had been her husband's friend. All through the summer she had been waiting to talk to him about Paolo, for he came from the city and knew more of the world than people in Pogerola. He sat cross-legged and smoked and sipped old wine outside the cottage door, discussing Paolo's future. Paolo, with moist hands, stayed within and listened.

"His father wanted to make a doctor of him," Concetta said, "but Paolino is different from either of us. He says nothing about it, because he is a good son; but even when he's talking of other things he thinks of nothing but painting. I want you to tell me what you think of it. His father said he would starve."

Alessandro waved his hand towards the yellowing vineyard. "He need never starve," he said, "while you have this. But you need help, Concetta; a woman like you shouldn't live alone. If you should marry . . ."

"No, I shall never marry," she told him. "In Pogerola men don't marry a woman of my age for love. And Paolo can never help me in that way. He has learnt Latin; he can read and write. I can't make a *contadino* of him. Tell me if it is true that all painters are beggars?"

"By no means," Alessandro assured her. "In every trade there are failures and successes, idle and industrious."

"Paolino will never be idle. It's a passion. His heart is in it."

"In that case, if he has a head for money as well, he may be quite as successful as a doctor. In Naples there is an artist who has dined at the Quirinal and painted the Holy Father in the Vatican itself. Well, nobody would call that beggary. Then there's another great artist, a sculptor, I should say, Gennaro's his name. Now he's so prosperous that he never even puts his hand to a chisel. Not he. He sits in his villa at Posillipo with servants to wait on him or drives down in his carriage and pair. He has workmen to paint the pictures and make the statues that foreigners buy, and a shop in the Toledo. No beggary there, either. Why, the amount he pays me for wine and oil would keep a man in comfort! What's more, he'll make a tighter bargain than anyone in Pogerola, and you people take some beating. Of course that one is what you call a genius, if you know the word, an artist in a million. Still, that will show you it's a trade worth learning."

Concetta trembled with delight. Half of her fears were dissipated, and yet the graver half remained. Was it true, as Andrea had told her, that these artists consorted with women and painted them naked? And with such women?

It was true, Alessandro told her, quite true. But that was only in the beginning.

"And now I'll tell you something," he went on. "You women will never realise that your sons grow into men. And men want women: that's the law of life. But" —and he waved his finger cunningly—"but women and all the things that do a young man harm are a matter of money. A full stomach, Concetta, and a full pocket. If your Paolino goes to Naples, keep him short. That's what I told a customer in Gragnano who's sending his son to Naples to be a doctor, and that's the truth, as sure as I'm sitting here."

Concetta stealthily showed him some of Paolo's pictures, strange, isolated sketches of forms that had entranced him. He surveyed them with an air of critical wisdom. "Yes, yes," he said, "that tree's an olive; you'd know it anywhere; they'll never learn to prune them rightly in Pogerola. Now, if they'd cut them low, as they do in Bari . . . like this . . ."

She listened patiently while Alessandro smudged the charcoal with his skinny thumb.

"But if I make up my mind to send him, Don Alessandro, how shall I begin?"

He laughed, refilling his glass. "When you talk like that I know you've made up your mind already. Paolo can twist you round his little finger! How to begin? I'll tell you. When I get back to Naples I'll see my friend, Gennaro, the millionaire at Posillipo, the one who keeps the shop in Toledo. I'll see if I can get your Paolino into his studio where he can see how the money is made. All he need do is to keep his eyes and ears open and learn what foreigners want and how much they'll give for it. Then, when I go to Gragnano, I'll see my other customer, the father of the boy who's going to be a doctor. His son must be two or three years older than Paolino—more, perhaps; but he's a smart fellow with a straight head, and if they two could lodge together he'll keep the youngster out of mischief. Lodgings come cheaper for two. And now about that oil. . . . It's a good year in Bari, Concetta; you won't be getting the prices of last November, nor anything like them."

Thus, in a series of scenes, words, odours—rising unchosen, almost unbidden, from some secret storehouse where memories kept their freshness unfaded—the past swarmed back into the brain of Paolo Ricci through the darkness of the *Trinacria's* upper deck.

¶

AND so he came, the Paolino of forty years ago, out of the clot of low streets, through which the boulevard now runs northward to the station, into the Piazza San Salvatore, where garbage lay littered as in a farmyard, and fishwomen screamed, and flies rose buzzing about his ears.

Don Alessandro, the wine merchant, walked with him—God knew how long ago old Alessandro had died!—he hobbled along with a rapid motion that was like the tripple of a well-trained donkey, flickering his salutations to left and right. For he was an old Neapolitan and well known in the port; while Paolino was breathless—not only with haste, but with wonder.

Naples was the first city he had ever seen; its streets were paved—not with garbage, but with jewels; the tall seventeenth-century houses awed him with their magnificence; and, high above all, the bright church cupola, jade against lapis lazuli of a dry December, brought his heart into his mouth. How should it be content with paper and carbon when such gigantic slender miracles might be wrought in stone? At once he was an architect, a builder of great churches, filling the sky with lovely gleaming domes.

"Come along, come along, come along!" Don Alessandro panted. "That open mouth of yours will catch more flies than maccheroni!"

Out of the sun, in the narrow lane, the air was an icy draught that made them shiver; within the archway a dank cold enveloped them. Paolo had never seen an entrance so impressive: a wide span, beneath which the equipages of eighteenth-century nobles had gallantly emerged; above it a coat-of-arms and a ducal coronet. Yet time had treated the house with little respect, scarring its friable front of volcanic stone with hideous ulcerations. To the right of the entrance some owner, more pious than reverent, had chiselled a niche for a blue-gowned smirking Madonna at whose feet lay votive offerings of withered wild narcissus, odorous in decay Their harsh scent impregnated the air, providentially masking a less tolerable stench of humanity and sweet charcoal smoke that rose from a dark cavern which generations of sub-human beings had excavated in the foundations of the house. From the mouth of this subterranean chamber the ragged and wasted figure of an old man grinned horribly at Paolo and held out his hand for alms.

"Don't look at them," Don Alessandro warned him, "or they will give you no peace. This is old Naples. Fine houses on the top, as you see; but underneath them, everywhere, these cellars—*fondaci* we call them—in which these people live. Beggars and murderers and thieves—God knows what rubbish you could find there if you looked! But nobody wants to look, least of all our brave policemen; and I, for one, don't blame them. There must be thousands on thousands of these *fondaci*. All the worst of our people settle down into them, like filth into a cesspit. Sewer rats—that's what they are. Some day, when this accursed kingdom of Italy remembers the poor South, it'll have to disembowel Naples and stop them up. In winter, these horrors don't show their ugly faces; but when the warm weather comes, out they swarm, making the city disgusting, and dragging in garbage from the streets to feed on. Like rats, I tell you, rats! Why, if I had my way I'd smoke them out with sulphur."

He paused in front of a warped wooden door and rang the bell. He rang impatiently, again and again; for, in spite of his good nature, this business of initiating Paolo was a nuisance. At last the door opened, cautiously, and a woman appeared. She was slight in figure and taller than Don Alessandro. In the cold light of the courtyard, Paolo thought her face was grave and very pale, in this first encounter, by her contrast with the women of Pogerola, whose skins were burned by sun and mountainous air. Her pallor was partly that of a living plant deprived of light, but partly that of a fairer, more northern race, as Paolo realised when he saw the copper hair bound back, like that of a primitive saint, from her smooth white brow. That brow was whiter, too, for the fine, dark line of eyebrow, clean-curved like a swallow's wings, and deep black eyes beneath them. She wore a kind of overall, black, and high at the neck, from the sleeves of which white arms escaped, arms strong and firm, with

a moulding of lithe muscle which contradicted the impression of fragility in her first appearance. Paolo, whose brown eyes were active as a hawk's, judged that she was thirty; a woman too old for boys to think about, though the peculiarity of her colouring attracted his painter's curiousness. When she answered Alessandro her voice was modest, almost humble. There was an inflexion in it that Paolo hadn't heard before. Its strangeness, and the reserve that controlled it, repelled and scared him.

But Alessandro was too old and too much of the world to be frightened of any woman.

"This is the house in which my friend, Pietro Viva, lodges? The young doctor from Gragnano? Yes, that's the boy. On the third floor? Aha, that calls for a younger heart than mine. Though mine's young enough, mark you, when it comes to certain questions," he added, screwing up the wrinkles round his merry dark eyes till they almost disappeared. "Now the question is this: Here is another young man; a young man from the country—innocent and gentle as a lamb, eh, Paolo?—who comes here from his mountains to study painting."

She turned and looked at Paolo as if she were wondering if Alessandro's words could be true. This long-legged, rustic figure, glowering embarrassment at her, clutching his cap with clumsy hands; flushed cheeks, and dark eyes, at once greedy and distrustful. This, her glance seemed to ask, a painter?

"He comes from Pogerola," Alessandro was saying. But what am I saying? Lodgings. That is our question. A small room—Paolo doesn't mind how small it is—on the same floor as Pietro. And cheap, mark you, cheap!"

She answered anxiously: "Yes, there is a room, a very small room though, next door to Signor Viva's."

"No doubt that would make things easier for you," said Alessandro persuasively. "The young men will be friends; they'll take their meals together. That'll be a saving, won't it, with all those steps to climb? So that, with such a combination, the room should come cheaper. Remember the importance of this—he is only beginning. A good, quiet young man who will give no trouble. Say fifteen francs a month?"

"You had better see the room for yourself," she answered. "Then we will talk of money. If you'll follow, I'll show you the way."

"By all means," Alessandro acquiesced politely. All through his speech Paolo had noticed that the wine merchant's little eyes were fascinated by those white arms. Now, as she moved to the stairs, his skinny fingers stole out and touched one of them in the soft curve above the elbow. Her body made a shudder of distaste which filled Paolo with chivalrous anger. He was glad that she resented Alessandro's obscene fingers. She hurried on ahead of them; her clogs made a clatter on the marble stairs. It seemed as if Don Alessandro were panting in pursuit, the house so lonely and she so unprotected that he must overtake her.

¶

"THIS is the doctor's room," she told them—the climb had faintly livened her cheeks, but even with this access of colour, Paolo decided, she was not beautiful—"and this, next door to it, is free."

A bare room, long and barrel-vaulted, with a bed, a trestled table and one chair. It was dark as a cellar, for the window that occupied the end of the cylinder was closed and shuttered; and yet its smell was clean and wholesome. The woman passed before them, throwing open shutters and window, admitting a flood of air and light which poured in like a torrent that has burst its sluices, blinding their sight, searching the limewashed walls. On the flood of this white magnificence Paolo's heart was tossed upward like a feather out of the depths into which the house's dank glooms had sunk it. When its overpowering impulse had subsided and his surprised eyes recovered themselves, he saw through the open window a greater wonder still—to the left the harbour, bristling with masts and cordage, motionless against a shimmering sea; to right, the bastions of the Angevin fortress, from which all Naples rose, like a wave of stone, to the crest of San Martiro and Sant Angelo's Castle. Never, in his life at Pogerola, had he seen the works of man attain such splendour. This was the home for him; after that revelation no other would satisfy.

Don Alessandro, meanwhile, was sniffing round like a pig in search of truffles, tapping the walls, shaking the table-legs, lifting the coarse linen of the bed and turning back the blankets.

"It's very small," he said dubiously. "Good for the winter, but summer will

make a furnace of it. It doesn't surprise me that this apartment is unoccupied." He curled depreciative lips—not because the room displeased him, but because, by a habit hardened into nature, he never made a bargain in any other way. "An ancient house," he went on, "an unhealthy neighbourhood. Sea breezes—yes; but then, the miasma from the port, and such a population of cut-throats! Did you say twenty francs a month? Come, come, signora, let us be reasonable! At fifteen, possibly. You mean that service is included? And bread and coffee in the morning?"

She shook her head. "Twenty is the price. If I wished to make it less I couldn't do so. The master has fixed it."

"The master? In that case I might talk with him. You mean, I suppose, your husband?"

"No, he is not my husband," she answered firmly, "and you can't talk with him. The matter is in my hands."

"If it had been eighteen," said Don Alessandro regretfully, with a keen sidelong glance, to see if she would answer. "Eighteen?" he repeated persuasively.

A door slammed and echoed in the basement below.

Suddenly the woman became agitated, as though some mysterious fear or admonition had reached her from outside their company. Colour mounted in her white throat. She clasped her hands. The calm by which she had seemed possessed forsook her; she was stirred, spiritually, physically, like a water ruffled by wind.

"I must go," she said. "I am sorry. I cannot stay here." She hurried to the window, where Paolo stood entranced, and closed it. He was conscious of a strange urgency in her movement. It seemed as if, for her, he no longer existed. She waited for them to move, impatiently, with clasped hands. Don Alessandro was curiously insensitive to these changes. He kept on quizzing her with his wrinkled eyes. "Eighteen?" he said. "Eighteen?"

"Please, please!" She did not even hear him, and Paolo, pained and disconcerted by his sudden expulsion from paradise, was seized with a sudden fear that its future possession was slipping away from him.

"This is the room I want," he declared firmly. "Let's say no more, Don Alessandro; I'm content with the price." If it had taken half of his monthly allowance of ninety francs he would have consented rather than lose this God-sent opportunity. "If I may come this evening?" he added anxiously. Don Alessandro stared amazement at his rashness.

"This evening, yes," she answered. "But now you must go—quickly. I am sorry."

She closed the door and locked it. Disturbed and preoccupied, she hurried them downstairs and disappeared without another word. Paolo and Don Alessandro, the second still huffed at the way in which the business had been snatched out of his hands and their abrupt dismissal, stood for a moment bewildered at the bottom of the steps. Within the room into which she had passed they heard the rasping of a voice, heavy and unpleasant in its suggestions of roughness, and then a long silence.

They emerged from the archway in silence. From the jaws of the *fondaco* the same repulsive beggar thrust out his hand. Don Alessandro clutched Paolo's arm.

"A fool of yourself," he repeated. "Now listen to me. Do not make a fool of yourself in another way. That woman's a Venetian, different from our people here. Be careful—I know that type. Those red, silent women, I tell you, are as crafty as foxes; crafty and lean and hungry. Hungry's the word. That woman could swallow a dozen of you at a mouthful, Paolino. Be careful, I say. Mind you don't get mixed up with that one or there'll be an end of everything."

Then Paolo laughed out loud. Why should Don Alessandro talk of women to him, who was in love with thronged shipping, and curious house-roofs, with all Naples, reared like a wave and breaking in stone castles against blinding sky?

¶

THAT evening, his neighbour, Pietro, the medical student, came swaggering into Paolo's life. Viva was his name; sanguine and vivid his nature. His father, as Don Alessandro had told Concetta, kept him short. If he had given him length, thought Paolo, then heaven help Naples! He was as full of sap, as rampant, as robust, as a Gragnano vine. Strong wine and generous comes out of Gragnano, and something of the force of that fluid ran in Viva's veins, declaring itself in the heat of an insatiable zest and energy and frank good humour. He burned, he radiated.

When he was near him, Paolo's dreams and meditations wilted like young leaves in the breath of a sirocco.

In every particular, physical or spiritual, he was Paolo's diametrical opposite. Therefore, from the first moment of their meeting, Paolo adored him.

Peitro Viva, flattered, yet always laughing at Paolo and himself, accepted this adoration for precisely what it was worth. That wise young man knew the value of everything; a fact that Paolo was quick to realise when, on the first evening, he trailed behind Viva, with straining ears, among the compact crowd that surged along the canalised course of the Toledo. The noise nearly deafened him; he was bewildered and excited by the swift procession of so many faces, grotesque or beautiful, yet each with a secret to be divined.

Above all, he was stirred and terrified by the faces of the women. In Pogerola he had never seen a woman wearing a hat, nor skins unburned by weather. The refinement, the delicacy, the exotic quality of these Neapolitan faces challenged his skill to give them expression; their distance, their haughtiness defied him, affirming that they were unattainable and himself an ill-dressed boor. In the midst of the Toledo, where traffic was wedged into a block, he found himself gazing full into the eyes of one of these exquisites and, as he gazed, she smiled. Nobody but the transfigured Annina had ever smiled at him like that. The smile drove him into a panic; he could not deal with it. Later, in the cheap eating-house where Viva took him to dine, Paolo confided to his new friend the embarrassing circumstance. Viva was glad enough to talk about women. It was a subject on which he felt he could speak with authority.

"A smile is cheap enough in Naples," Viva told him. "It's automatic. The dear innocents can no more help smiling when you catch their eye than a cherry tree can stop putting out blossom in April. But it's one thing to see the blossoms, Paolino, and quite another to pick the cherries and stuff your mouth with them. This Naples is a devil of a place. Money, money, money! Of course, they have adventurous fancies, these ladies, as I've good reason to know; but if you'll take my advice . . ."

The advice was so frankly brutal that Paolo hastened to explain that his interest was merely romantic. Timidly he quoted Dante. Viva stared at him; he hadn't realised, till that moment, that he was dining with an idiot.

"That excellent poet, my dear Paolo, lived in the sixteenth century."

"The fourteenth," Paolo corrected seriously.

"What does it matter?" Viva laughed. "This is the nineteenth. A different pair of sleeves. The economic situation has changed. Tell me what this old mother of yours allows you."

"Don Alessandro will give me ninety francs a month."

"Not bad to begin with. And in the studio? What will they pay you for that?"

"Nothing. I go there to learn. It's supposed to be a privilege. There are eight pupils. We work away at the copies. The *padrone* keeps an eye on us and criticises our work."

"And sells it afterwards. I don't know what sort of artist your Gennaro is, but he's a damned good business-man. Now listen to me, my friend; you can't put romantic pictures into a frame of ninety francs a month, so don't imagine it. Your room will cost you a quarter to begin with. That leaves two francs a day for food and diversion, which may be good enough in Pogerola, or whatever the barbarous place is called, but in Naples! Life, I tell you at once, my dear Paolo, is not going to be a bed of roses. Possibly, if you're careful, you won't starve; but that's about as far as I'll go. You can't dine here, to begin with. I'll show you another place to-morrow. Why, even I only come here at the beginning of the month, when I'm flush. This is your last experience of gilded luxury, so make the most of it. Two francs a day! My poor boy, it's a crime! A beggar could pick up as much. You'd better make a fuss about it at once."

Paolo shook his head. "If I did that I should find myself back in Pogerola. My mother believes everything that Don Alessandro tells her, and he says it's enough."

"Enough? Enough? The meanness of this old devil who skins our parents when he comes to buy their wine and keeps a mistress in Torre on it. 'I never drink,' he says. I've heard him say it; and seen him lying in the bottom of a cart like a sack of flour. I suppose he made the bargain for you with Gennaro's studio? How much has he made out of that?

Don't answer me: 'Nothing.' He's a *camorrista*, that one; he'd get a commission on his best friend's funeral. One thing I'll say for him—he knows good wine and how to get it cheap. It's he who sells it to this place. Why don't you drink it, now that you've got the chance? Come on, now! Waiter—another bottle!"

Viva emptied the last drains into Paolo's glass. He himself had drunk enough to be generous; though, indeed, no wine was needed to make him so, for Paolo, at the moment, was a guest, and Viva sufficiently Neapolitan in his training to know that for a guest no hospitality is too lavish. When the last drop was drained and Paolo suggested paying his share of the bill, Viva showed himself almost offended. What did he take him for? Weren't they already friends, and Paolo a stranger, and this the first of the month? "When I'm broke," he said, "and want money, you can be sure I'll ask you for it." He flung a handful of silver on the table and left the waiter a whole franc for tip. "Half of my daily income," Paolo thought; in Pogerola people reckoned their purchases in copper, *soldi*. It was magnificent, he decided, as they emerged from the vinous odours of the restaurant. All things were magnificent that night—not only his gay companion, but this city of brilliant streets through which they swayed arm in arm, with its high façades and wide spaces of darkness. Even the cabs rolled by like triumphal chariots. He remembered how, from the terraces above Pogerola, the reflex of Naples could sometimes be seen lighting the night sky. How he, the adventurous Paolo, was the incredible centre of that core of light.

The contrast seemed so significant that he had to confide it to his new friend: "To think that in my village everyone's asleep!"

"In your village, my dear Paolo, they're never awake. Here, in Naples, nobody ever sleeps except for a few moments in the winter. In summer you can hear them chattering all night long. That's why you'll have to be careful. You'd better take my arm. Even if I am drunk—which I'm quite ready to admit—I'm a protection. You don't know the character of these streets down by the harbour. Why, in those country clothes of yours, you'll get your coat thrut—throat cut; they'll take you for a young carter come in from the mountains with a string of donkeys. A *zampognaro*. Can you play the bagpipes, by any chance? But, seriously, Paolo, and speaking with respect, these clothes won't do. If you've the money to get them out of pawn you can have a suit of mine; we're much of a size, although you slouch like a donkey-man. Peter and Paul; two brotherly saints. That's good! For God's sake, mind your steps. There's a hole here that'll take you double-quick into the Roman sewers. Even when I'm drunk, that's the one thing I remember. Clothes, was I saying? In that rig-out you'll never get a girl to look at you."

With unusual eloquence Paolo explained that he didn't want them to.

"Come, come, that's nonsense," Pietro assured him. "Speaking as a friend, and man to man, what else is there in life that really matters?"

"There's art," said Paolo piously.

"But artists, notoriously, my dear Paolo, need them more than most men. Even your old friend, Dante, who, between ourselves, is a bigger bore than anyone except his commentators. Even an artist can't be different from everyone else or nobody will buy his work; and if nobody buys your work, why, what's the good of painting?"

"It's good in itself," said Paolo stubbornly.

"But quite impossible unless you're a gentleman of property, which isn't your case on ninety francs a month. I'm sorry for you, my friend, but there it is. Either you decide to become a normal civilised being, or else you'd better make up your mind to go back to Pogerola and keep goats."

The taunt threw Paolo into a rebellious silence, which lasted until they had crossed the square and entered the archway. As they approached the flights of marble stairway, Viva took his arm in an attempt to soften by this familiarity the violence of his argument.

"You needn't take me as seriously as all that, Paolo," he said. "I never mean more than half of what I say. But, still, that half's sound sense. I was as raw as you when I came here first. A fellow has got to adapt himself sooner or later. If he doesn't do it willingly, he'll be kicked into it, and that'll hurt like the devil. You can't convert Naples into your blessed Pogerola at this time of day. I warn you for your own sake. You don't like it now; but later on you'll thank me."

The foot of the stair was black as a pit. Suddenly a door opened; the beam of an oil lantern swept the court. Behind it Paolo saw the figure of the woman who had received him in the morning. Straighter and paler than ever she seemed, and curiously forlorn, with deep shadows ringing her dark eyes and marking the composure of that sad mouth. Though Viva and Paolo stood full in the light of her lantern, she did not appear to recognise them. She seemed as detached from life as though she were a picture, hung there in the doorway. As a picture it stamped itself on Paolo's brain; that guarded light, illuminating the white forearm on which Don Alessandro had gloated—one ray, directed upward, falling across the coil of molten copper that was her hair. Viva swept off his cap with a gallant gesture and smiled. She saw, but her features gave no sign of seeing. They might have been chiselled out of marble.

Behind her they heard a sound of nailed boots ringing on the tiles. A man cleared his throat raucously and spat, then suddenly loomed, enormous, across the light. He lurched in between them and the woman who held it, a vast figure in a hunting-coat and breeches of bottle-green corduroy, with a fowling-piece slung crosswise over his back. He must have been very tall, at least six inches taller than Viva or Paolo; but his neck was short and thick, and he carried his black head low down between the shoulders, so that he seemed, as he walked, to be impending over some invisible prey with bandy arms so long that they almost reached his knees. His forehead was fiery red, with black brushes for eyebrows; his nose blunt and bulbous, his strong jowl covered with a beard crisp and curly, like the wool of a black ram. And he came at them, out of the doorway, with head lowered like a charging bull.

Viva, surprised by the violent apparition, drew politely aside and wished it good evening. The hunter answered with nothing but a snort. He swept past them with the deadly intensity of a bull that has seen red and can think of nothing else. Paolo had the impression that if they had stood their ground they would have gone down before him. When he recovered from his surprise he saw that the ground-floor was shut, and that his picture of the woman with the lantern had disappeared. He heard Viva laughing in the dark. Viva clutched his arm.

"That's a fine sight for a man's who's drunk an extra bottle of wine. Is it just liquor or did you notice anything?"

"Who is he?" Paolo asked, "and what's he doing here?"

Suppose you knock at the door and ask Cristina," he joked. "She ought to know."

"Cristina?"

"Cristina. The lady of the house. Didn't you see her when you took your room this morning? The one with the red hair and the ugly mouth. Of course, you never notice women. She must have been a beauty in her day; but that, my dear boy, was the day before yesterday. It was her room he came from."

"You spoke to him. You've seen him before. Not that it's the kind of face you'd forget."

"Of course I've seen him before. It's he that Cristina calls her master. No, if you take my advice you won't ask her about him.

"What is *his* name, then?" Paolo asked.

"You know," said Viva querulously, "you're so damned literal. *I* don't know his name, and you can take it from me that Cristina won't tell it you. He's her pet mystery, and she's welcome to him. I call him the black hunter. Before you've been here long you'll often meet him on the stairs; always the same great dark brute, with his shooting-clothes and the gun over his shoulder. If you've any sense, you'll keep out of his way and hold your tongue. One word, and he looks as if he'd murder you. He is a murderer; I'd stake my shirt on that. Sometimes he carries a bag. Don't think there's thrushes in it, and don't go looking too closely at it, or you may get a shock."

"But if he's so—friendly with her," Paolo persisted, "why did she look like that—so crushed, so terrified?"

"I've told you she calls him her master. I dare say—those lifeless, pallid women often prefer a black brute for a lover. Since you're so interested, you might take the matter in hand and make inquiries."

"She looked so pitiable, so helpless. It's damnable! What could she do—a woman all alone like that?"

"Ah! Now you're getting romantic. If you feel so strongly, you'd better try and comfort her—provided you've a fancy for a woman who might almost be your mother. Why not?"

(*To be continued in next month's* ARGOSY.)

The Inevitable White Man

A grim drama of the survival of the fittest

By JACK LONDON

"THE black will never understand the white, nor the white the black, as long as black is black and white is white."

So said Captain Woodward. We sat in the parlour of Charley Roberts' pub in Apia, drinking long Abdul Hammeds, compounded and shared with us by the aforesaid Charley Roberts, who claimed the recipe direct from Stevens, famous for having invented the Abdul Hammed at a time when he was spurred on by Nile thirst—the Stevens who was responsible for "With Kitchener to Khartoum" and who passed out at the siege of Ladysmith.

Captain Woodward, short and squat, elderly, burned by forty years of tropic sun and with the most beautiful liquid brown eyes I ever saw in a man, spoke from a vast experience. The criss-cross of scars on his bald pate bespoke a tomahawk intimacy with the black, and of equal intimacy was the advertisement, front and rear, on the right side of his neck, where an arrow had at one time entered and been pulled clean through. As he explained, he had been in a hurry on that occasion—the arrow impeded his running—and he felt that he could not take the time to break off the head and pull out the shaft the way it had come in. At the present moment he was commander of the "Savaii," the big steamer that recruited labour from the westward for the German plantations on Samoa.

"Half the trouble is the stupidity of the whites," said Roberts, pausing to take a swig from his glass and to curse the Samoan bar-boy in affectionate terms. "If the white man would lay himself out a bit to understand the workings of the black man's mind, most of the messes would be avoided."

"I've seen a few who claimed they understood niggers," Captain Woodward retorted, "and I always took notice that they were the first to be kai-kai'd (eaten). Look at the missionaries in New Guinea and the New Hebrides—the martyr isle of Erromanga, and all the rest. Look at the Austrian expedition that was cut to pieces in the Solomons, in the bush of Guadalcanar. And look at the traders themselves, with a score of years' experience, making their brag that no nigger would ever get them, and whose heads to this day are ornamenting the rafters of the canoe houses. There was old Johnny Simons—twenty-six years on the raw edges of Melanesia—swore he knew the niggers like a book and that they'd never do for him and he passed out at Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia, had his head sawed off by a black Mary (woman) and an old nigger with only one leg, having left the other leg in the mouth of a shark while diving for dynamited fish. There was Billy Watts, horrible reputation as a nigger-killer, a man to scare the devil. I remember lying at Cape Little—New Ireland, you know—when the niggers stole half a case of trade tobacco—cost him about three dollars and a half. In retaliation he turned out, shot six niggers, smashed up their war-canoes and burned two villages. And it was at Cape Little, four years afterwards, that he was jumped along with fifty Baku boys he had with him fishing beche-de-mer. In five minutes they were all dead, with the exception of three boys who got away in a canoe. Don't talk to me about understanding the nigger. The white man's mission is to farm the world, and it's a big enough job cut out for him. What time has he got left to understand niggers anyway?"

"Just so," said Roberts. "And somehow it doesn't seem necessary, after all, to understand the niggers. In direct proportion to the white man's stupidity is his success in farming the world——"

"And putting the fear of God into the nigger's heart," Captain Woodward blurted out. "Perhaps you're right, Roberts. Perhaps it's his stupidity that makes him succeed and surely one phase of his stupidity

is his inability to understand the niggers. But there's one thing sure, the white has to run the niggers whether he understands them or not. It's inevitable. It's fate."

"And, of course, the white man is inevitable—it's the niggers' fate," Roberts broke in. "Tell the white man there's pearl-shell in some lagoon infested by ten thousand howling cannibals and he'll head there all by his lonely, with half a dozen kanaka divers and a tin alarm clock for chronometer, all packed like sardines on a commodious five-ton ketch. Whisper that there's a gold-strike at the North Pole and that same inevitable white-skinned creature will set out at once, armed with pick and shovel, a side of bacon and the latest patent rocker—and what's more, he'll get there. Tip it off to him that there's diamonds on the red-hot ramparts of hell and Mr. White Man will storm the ramparts and set old Satan himself to pick-and-shovel work. That's what comes of being stupid and inevitable."

"But I wonder what the black man must think of the—the inevitableness," I said.

Captain Woodward broke into quiet laughter. His eyes had a reminiscent gleam.

"I'm just wondering what the niggers of Malu thought and still must be thinking, of the one inevitable white man we had on board when we visited them in the 'Duchess,'" he explained. Roberts mixed three more Abdul Hammeds. "That was twenty years ago. Saxtorph was his name. He was certainly the most stupid man I ever saw, but he was as inevitable as death. There was only one thing that chap could do and that was shoot. I remember the first time I ran into him—right here in Apia, twenty years ago. That was before your time, Roberts. I was sleeping at Dutch Henry's hotel, down where the market is now. Ever heard of him? He made a tidy stake smuggling arms in to the rebels, sold out his hotel and was killed in Sydney just six weeks afterwards in a saloon row.

"But Saxtorph. One night I'd just got to sleep when a couple of cats began to sing in the courtyard. I was out of bed and up window, water-jug in hand. Just then I heard the window of the next room go up. Two shots were fired and the window was closed. I fail to impress you with the celerity of the transaction. Ten seconds at the outside. Up went the window, bang, bang went the revolver and down went the window. Whoever it was, he had never stopped to see the effect of his shots. He knew. Do you follow me?—he knew. There was no more cat-concert and in the morning there lay the two offenders, stone dead. It was marvellous to me. It still is marvellous. First, it was starlight and Saxtorph shot without drawing a bead; next, he shot so rapidly that the two reports were like a double-report; and, finally, he knew he had hit his marks without looking to see.

"Two days afterwards he came on board to see me. I was mate then, on the 'Duchess,' a whacking big one-hundred-and-fifty-ton schooner—a blackbirder. And let me tell you that blackbirders were blackbirders in those days. There weren't any government inspectors and no government protection for us, either. It was rough work, give and take, if we were finished we were finished and nothing said, and we ran niggers from every south sea island they didn't kick us off from. Well, Saxtorph came on board, John Saxtorph was the name he gave. He was a sandy little man, hair sandy, complexion sandy and eyes sandy, too. Nothing striking about him. His soul was as neutral as his colour scheme. He said he was strapped and wanted to ship on board. Would go cabin-boy, cook, supercargo or common sailor. Didn't know anything about any of the billets but said that he was willing to learn. I didn't want him, but his shooting had so impressed me that I took him as common sailor, wages three pounds per month.

"He was willing to learn all right, I'll say that much. But he was constitutionally unable to learn anything. He could no more box the compass than I could mix drinks like Roberts here. And as for steering, he gave me my first grey hairs. I never dared risk him at the wheel when we were running in a big sea, while full-and-by and close-and-by were insoluble mysteries. Couldn't ever tell the difference between a sheet and a tackle—simply couldn't. The fore-throat-jig and the jib-jig were all one to him. Tell him to slack off the main-sheet and before you knew it he'd drop the peak. He fell overboard three times and he couldn't swim. But he was always cheerful, never seasick and he was the most willing man I ever knew. He was an uncommunicative soul. Never talked about himself. His history, so far as we were concerned, began the day he signed on the 'Duchess.'

Where he learned to shoot, the stars alone can tell. He was a Yankee—that much we knew from the twang in his speech. And that was all we ever did know.

"And now we begin to get to the point. We had bad luck in the New Hebrides, only fourteen boys for five weeks and we ran up before the south-east for the Solomons. Malaita, then as now, was good recruiting ground and we ran in to Malu, on the north-western corner. There's a shore-reef and an outer reef and a mighty nervous anchorage; but we made it all right and fired off our dynamite as a signal to the niggers to come down and be recruited. In three days we got not a boy. The niggers came off to us in their canoes by hundreds, but they only laughed when we showed them beads and calico and hatchets and talked of the delights of plantation work in Samoa.

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"ON the fourth day there came a change. Fifty-odd boys signed on and were billeted in the main-hold, with the freedom of the deck, of course. And of course, looking back, this wholesale signing on was suspicious, but at the time we thought some powerful chief had removed the ban against recruiting. The morning of the fifth day our two boats went ashore as usual—one to cover the other, you know, in case of trouble. And, as usual, the fifty niggers on board were on deck, loafing, talking, smoking and sleeping. Saxtorph and myself, along with four other sailors, were all that were left on board. The two boats were manned with Gilbert islanders. In one were the captain, the super-cargo and the recruiter. In the other, which was the covering boat, and which lay off shore a hundred yards, was the second mate. Both boats were well-armed, though trouble was little expected.

"Four of the sailors, including Saxtorph, were scraping the poop rail. The fifth sailor, rifle in hand, was standing guard by the water tank just for'ard of the mainmast. I was for'ard, putting in the finishing licks on a new jaw for the fore-gaff. I was just reaching for my pipe, where I had laid it down, when I heard a shot from shore. I straightened up to look. Something struck me on the back of the head, partially stunning me, and knocking me to the deck. My first thought was that something had carried away aloft, but even as I went down and before I struck the deck, I heard the devil's own tattoo of rifles from the boats and, twisting sidewise, I caught a glimpse of the sailor who was standing guard. Two big niggers were holding his arms and a third nigger from behind was braining him with a tomahawk.

"I can see it now, the water tank, the main-mast, the gang hanging on to him, the hatchet descending on the back of his head and all under the blazing sunlight. I was fascinated by that growing vision of death. The tomahawk seemed to take a horribly long time to come down. I saw it land and the man's legs give under him as he crumpled. The niggers held him up by sheer strength while he was hacked a couple of times more. Then I got two more hacks on the head and decided that I was dead. So did the brute that was hacking me. I was too helpless to move and I lay there and watched them removing the sentry's head. I must say they did it slick enough. They were old hands at the business.

"The rifle-firing from the boats had ceased and I made no doubt that they were finished off and that the end had come to everything. It was only a matter of moments when they would return for my head. They were evidently taking the heads from the sailors aft. Heads are valuable on Malaita, especially white heads. They have the place of honour in the canoe-houses of the salt-water natives. What particular decorative effect the bushmen get out of them I don't know, but they prize them just as much as the salt-water crowd.

"I had a dim notion of escaping and I crawled on hands and knees to the winch, where I managed to drag myself to my feet. From there I could look aft and see three heads on top of the cabin—the heads of three sailors I had given orders to for months. The niggers saw me standing and started for me. I reached for my revolver and found they had taken it. I can't say that I was scared. I've been near to death several times, but it never seemed easier than right then. I was half-stunned and nothing seemed to matter.

"The leading nigger had armed himself with a cleaver from the galley and he grimaced like an ape as he prepared to slice me down. But the slice was never made. He went down on the deck all of a heap and I saw the blood gush from his mouth. In a dim way I heard a rifle go off and continue

to go off. Nigger after nigger went down. My senses began to clear and I noted that there was never a miss. Every time that rifle went off a nigger dropped. I sat down on deck beside the winch and looked up. Perched in the cross-trees was Saxtorph. How he had managed it I can't imagine, for he had carried up with him two Winchesters and I don't know how many bandoliers of ammunition; and he was now doing the one only thing in this world that he was fitted to do.

"I've seen shooting and slaughter, but I never saw anything like that. I sat by the winch and watched the show. I was weak and faint and it seemed to be all a dream. Bang, bang, bang, bang, went his rifle, and thud, thud, thud, thud, went the niggers to the deck. It was amazing to see them go down. After their first rush to get me, when about a dozen had dropped, they seemed paralysed, but he never left off pumping his gun. By this time canoes and the two boats arrived from shore, armed with Sniders and with Winchesters, which they had captured in the boats. The fusilade they let loose on Saxtorph was tremendous. Luckily for him the niggers are only good at close range. They are not used to putting the guns to their shoulders. They wait until they are right on top of a man and then they shoot from the hip. When his rifle got too hot, Saxtorph changed off. That had been his idea when he carried two rifles up with him.

"The astounding thing was the rapidity of his fire. Also, he never made a miss. If ever anything was inevitable, that man was. It was the swiftness of it that made the slaughter so appalling. The niggers did not have time to think. When they did manage to think they were over the side in a rush, capsizing the canoes, of course. Saxtorph never let up. The water was covered with them, and plump, plump, plump, he dropped his bullets into them. Not a single miss, and I could hear distinctly the thud of every bullet as it buried in human flesh.

"The niggers spread out and headed for the shore, swimming. The water was carpeted with bobbing heads and I stood up, as in a dream, and watched it all—the bobbing heads and the heads that ceased to bob. Some of the long shots were magnificent. Only one man reached the beach, but as he stood up to wade ashore, Saxtorph got him. It was beautiful. And when a couple of niggers ran down to drag him out of the water, Saxtorph got them, too.

"I thought everything was over then, when I heard the rifle go off again. A nigger had come out of the cabin companion on the run for the rail and gone down in the middle of it. The cabin must have been full of them. I counted twenty. They came up one at a time and jumped for the rail. But they never got there. It reminded me of trap-shooting. A black body would pop out of the companion, bang would go Saxtorph's rifle and down would go the black body. Of course, those below did not know what was happening on deck, so they continued to pop out until the last one was finished off.

"Saxtorph waited a while to make sure and then came down on deck. He and I were all that were left of the 'Duchess's' complement and I was pretty well to the bad, while he was helpless now that the shooting was over. Under my direction he washed out my scalp wounds and sewed them up. A big drink of whisky braced me to make an effort to get out. There was nothing else to do. All the rest were dead. We tried to get up sail, Saxtorph hoisting and I holding the turn. He was once more the stupid lubber. He couldn't hoist worth a cent, and when I fell in a faint it looked all up with us.

"When I came to, Saxtorph was sitting helplessly on the rail, waiting to ask me what he should do. I told him to overhaul the wounded and see if there were any able to crawl. He gathered together six. One, I remember, had a broken leg; but Saxtorph said his arms were all right. I lay in the shade, brushing the flies off and directing operations, while Saxtorph bossed his hospital gang. I'll be blessed if he didn't make these poor niggers heave at every rope on the pin-rails before he found the halyards. One of them let go the rope in the midst of the hoisting and slipped down to the deck dead; but Saxtorph hammered the others and made them stick by the job. When the fore and main were up, I told him to knock the shackle out of the anchor chain and let her go. I had myself helped aft to the wheel, where I was going to make a shift at steering. I can't guess how he did it, but instead of knocking the shackle out, down went the second anchor and there we were, doubly moored.

"In the end he managed to knock both shackles out and raise the staysail and

jib and the 'Duchess' filled away for the entrance. Our decks were a spectacle. Dead and dying niggers were everywhere. They were wedged away some of them in the most inconceivable places. The cabin was full of them, where they had crawled off the deck and cashed in. I put Saxtorph and his graveyard gang to work heaving them overside and over they went, the living and the dead. The sharks had fat pickings that day. Of course, our four murdered sailors went the same way. Their heads, however, we put in a sack with weights, so that by no chance should they drift on the beach and fall into the hands of the niggers.

"Our five prisoners I decided to use as crew, but they decided otherwise. They watched their opportunity and went over the side. Saxtorph got two in mid-air with his revolver and would have shot the other three in the water if I hadn't stopped him. I was sick of the slaughter, you see, and besides, they'd helped work the schooner out. But it was mercy thrown away, for the sharks got the three of them.

"I had brain fever or something after we got clear of the land. Anyway, the 'Duchess' lay hove-to for three weeks, when I pulled myself together and we jogged on with her to Sydney. Anyway, those niggers of Malu learned the everlasting lesson that it is not good to monkey with a white man. In their case, Saxtorph was certainly inevitable."

Charley Roberts emitted a long whistle and said:

"Well, I should say so. But whatever became of Saxtorph?"

"He drifted into seal-hunting and became a crackerjack. For six years he was high line on both the Victoria and San Francisco fleets. The seventh year his schooner was seized in Bering Sea by a Russian cruiser and all hands, so the talk went, were slammed into the Siberian salt mines. At least, I've never heard of him since."

"Farming the world," Roberts muttered. "Farming the world. Well, here's to them. Somebody's got to do it—farm the world, I mean."

Captain Woodward rubbed the criss-crosses on his bald head.

"I've done my share of it," he said. "Forty years now. This will be my last trip. Then I'm going home to stay."

"I'll wager the wine you don't," Roberts challenged. "You'll die in the harness, not at home."

Captain Woodward promptly accepted the bet, but personally I think Charley Roberts has the best of it.

The Happy Milkmaid

IS a Country Wench, that is so far from making herself beautiful by art that one look of hers is able to put all face-physick out of countenance. She knows a fair look is but a dumb orator to command virtue, therefore minds not. All her excellencies stand in her so silently as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel (which is herself) is far better than outsides of tissue: for though she be not arrayed in the spoil of the silkworm, she is decked in innocency, a far better wearing. She doth not, with lying long abed, spoil her complexion and conditions: nature hath taught her too immoderate sleep is rust to the soul: she rises therefore with the *Chanticleer*, her dame's cock, and at night makes the lamb her curfew. In milking a Cow, and straining the teats through her fingers, it seems that so sweet a milk-press makes the milk the whiter or sweeter; for never came almond glove or aromatic ointment on her palm to taint it. The golden ears of corn fall and kiss her feet when she reaps them, as if they wished to be bound and led prisoners by the same hand that felled them. Her breath is her own, which scents all the year long of *June*, like a new-made haycock. She makes her hand hard with labour, and her heart soft with pity; and when the winter evenings fall early (sitting at her merry wheel) she sings a defiance to the giddy *wheel of Fortune*. SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

The Clockmaker and His Wife

" To understand is to forgive "

By BEATRICE HARRADEN

IT was late in the evening, and the rain, which had been pouring all the day long, was still pelting against the windows of the clockmaker's kitchen. The clockmaker's wife put down her knitting, threw a few sticks on the fire, unfastened the bellows from their accustomed place on the right-hand side of the hearth, and by their aid fanned life into the dying embers. She glanced at the clockmaker, who sat at the table, and was busily engaged in repairing a watch.

" Thomas," she said, " I am sure you cannot see by that light. Let me trim you another lamp."

" I have just done," he answered gruffly, without looking up from his work.

He went on working, and she went on knitting ; and, except for the sound of her needles, and the purring of the black cat which sat staring into the fire, there was silence in the room, until the clockmaker dropped one of his tools, and the black cat sprang after it, and chased it gaily on the floor.

" The devil take that cat ! " growled the clockmaker.

" Not yet, I hope," said the little old lady, who quietly picked up the tool, replaced it on the table, and caressed the offending cat, which, after this vigorous sally, had returned to its former task of contemplating the fire.

The little old lady leaned forward in her chair and nursed her face. She was an old-fashioned person, with sharp features, and stiff grey ringlets falling over her sunken cheeks. Her eyes were piercingly bright ; she had an intellectual forehead ; her countenance was almost distressing in its eagerness.

At last the clockmaker rose from his chair, and came and rested in the old carved-oak settle, which served the double purpose of keeping out the draught from the door, and forming a comfortable though ancient seat.

He took off his spectacles, and held them in his hand.

" Well, Volumnia," he said, " to-morrow you and I will part. Not a very pleasant prospect, so far as the weather is concerned. Do you hear the rain ? "

" I fear you will have a wet journey," said his wife. " Perhaps you remember that to-morrow is the anniversary of our wedding-day. On that day the rain came down in torrents, just as it is pouring now. That was not a very cheerful omen for our wedding."

" No, Volumnia," the old man answered, smiling grimly ; " my friends tried to persuade me not to marry you."

" Precisely," said the old lady, drily ; " and my friends tried to persuade me not to marry you."

" I wish you had listened to them, Volumnia," he sighed, as he leaned back in the settle. Volumnia Webster shrugged her shoulders.

" Because I did not listen to my friends, and you did not listen to your friends, Thomas," she said, " we have each of us lost thirty-five years of life. That was a pity. Life is short, and we cannot afford to fritter it away. But in all human probability we have each of us about twenty more years to live ; so we must make the most of that. There is plenty of time to do a good many things in twenty years."

" The curious part," said the clockmaker, as he stroked the black cat—" the curious part, Volumnia, is that we have never thought of all this before. Now, to be honest with me, do you recollect a single day's pleasure in my company ? "

Volumnia Webster mused.

" Nothing readily suggests itself to me," she said, after a pause. " Ah, yes : I *can* recall one very happy day in London, spent with books and pictures. Stay, I forgot that you did not spend that day with me. No, Thomas : to be candid with you, I can dwell on nothing pleasurable in the past,

so far as you are concerned. The fact is, there has always been such a gulf between us; I came from surroundings utterly different from your world; and not only our spheres, but our actual ways of looking at things were different. Then, too, I was of gentle birth. You know I have no wish to speak unkind words to you, Thomas, but I do not think the same adjective can qualify your birth."

"You have told me that several times before," he replied, half-sulkily. "You may have forgotten all your other duties, but you have never forgotten the duty of reminding me, either directly or indirectly, that your father was a naval captain, and that my father was not a naval captain. But there, let that pass: everybody must have some kind of hobby, and I do not grudge you yours. We were speaking of enjoyment in the past, were we not? You said you could recollect nothing pleasant so far as I was concerned. Well, I have the advantage of you, Volumnia; for I can recall a very happy day spent with you in Winchester Cathedral. Do you not remember looking at the Crusaders, and noting which of them had been once, twice, or thrice to the Holy Land? I thought them fools because of their enthusiasm, and, as usual you did not agree with me. And then we went into the town, and bought that clock yonder. That reminds me: there is something wrong with the hands; I must see to them before I go to bed to-night. Indeed, I will do so now."

"You are getting confused," said Volumnia Webster placidly, as her husband opened the glass of the clock's face; "I have never been in Winchester."

"Why, of course," he answered, turning round, "you were not with me! That was the happiest day I ever spent. Everything in Winchester interested me, and I made friends with that old clockmaker, who wanted me to buy his business. If I had had the money, nothing would have pleased me better, for I always felt buried in this stupid village. I have never had the chance of putting my talents to good account. Well, that is of the past too."

He had now set in order the hands of the clock; and, taking out his heavy gold watch, he corrected the time, and returned to the settle.

"I should tell you, Volumnia," he continued, "that I leave my affairs in excellent condition. I have wound them up just as if they were the affairs of a dead man. I owe nothing; indeed some few shillings are owing to me for repairs which I have finished this afternoon. The clock belongs to Farmer Garrett, and the watch is the property of Mr. Fane. Be sure to return them to-morrow; and as for the extra money, it will be useful to you at Christmas."

Volumnia Webster stirred uneasily in her chair.

"Christmas without you, will seem strange Thomas," she said.

"Perhaps," he answered; "but one soon gets accustomed to feeling strange."

He took from his pocket his heavy old-fashioned watch, and looked at it regretfully.

"You remember, this belonged to your brother, Volumnia?" he said, sadly. "It has been my companion for many years. I suppose I must give it back to you; but I shall miss it terribly."

"No doubt you will feel strange at first," said Volumnia; "but, to quote your own words, one soon gets accustomed to feeling strange."

The old clockmaker shook his head.

"No, Volumnia," he replied; "I shall miss the watch sadly. We can learn to do without people much more easily than without things. We become absurdly attached to our little personal possessions." His voice faltered as he spoke.

"I give in," she said, after a pause; "you may keep the watch."

"Thank you," he said, warmly; "that is generous of you. In fact, Volumnia, you have been kind to me in a great many ways; and I think I ought to tell you, that I owe you a certain amount of gratitude for all that you have done for me, and been to me, during these thirty-five years. Sometimes I think it almost a pity that we should part; but, on the whole, I believe we have decided for the best. And now, listen, Volumnia: I wish to impress on you that if any neighbours come in and question you about our affairs, as neighbours will do, you may just tell them that we have not parted in anger, but that we are tired of each other. If they want more particulars, as neighbours often do want, you may tell them to go to the devil and get satisfied. They will not put further questions to you."

"I will remember your words," said his wife, putting down a violet comforter which she had just that moment finished. "Here is your comforter: be sure and wear it in the cold and damp weather, for you cannot

afford to trifle with your throat; and if you wish to live a good twenty years longer, you must take every possible precaution. For my own part, I shall be anxious to know how your health goes on. Is it desirable that we should exchange letters?"

"I think that is hardly necessary," he said, looking approvingly at the comforter. "After to-morrow, we practically cease to live for each other: so that it cannot really matter to you what becomes of me, and it cannot matter to me what becomes of you."

She drew her chair a little nearer to him, and looked at him almost pleadingly: she looked at the face, which had once shone with kindness for her; at the forehead, which her hand had so often soothed in hours of sickness; at his hair, grey in some places and white in others; and she remembered how she had once tried to count those many curls, and had left off in despair. They were still there, those same curls, but grown old and grey. She thought of the young workman of thirty-five years ago, whose love and courage in an hour of trouble had won her heart; and when she spoke again, there were very gently accents in her voice.

"There have been times, Thomas," she whispered, as she put her hand on his arm—"there have been times when I have loved you very dearly. I want you to know this, and to remember this when you are far away; for it is something to be loved tenderly, if only for a short time."

A tear fell from her bright eye on to his hand. He looked up, and seeing that her eyes were full of tears, he pressed her hand and bade her be comforted. But even as he spoke, there was a strange tremor in his voice, and a troubled expression on his own face. Thus they sat together in silence.

Then she spoke.

"There are some few treasures which we must must divide to-night, Thomas. You were asking me the other day for the miniature of your grandfather. I have got it quite safe, together with the old picture of my mother. All our little relics are in that box. We shall see better if we look at them by the lamplight; and when we have decided which are yours and which are mine, I will set the supper-table, and fry you some bacon and sausages."

Sitting side by side at the table, they took out the treasures one by one; and old memories were called forth at the sight of each cherished object: glad memories and sad memories curiously intermingled. There was a chain belonging to the naval captain's father, and a picture of the naval captain himself, at which Volumnia Webster gazed proudly, and at which the clockmaker stared resignedly; and there were a few curious rings, some of which were identified by the clockmaker, and others by his wife.

"See here, Volumnia," he said; "this is my mother's hair in this quaint locket. I never knew my mother, but I remember being told that they cut off a lock of her hair as she lay dead, and they placed it in my tiny hands. I am glad to see that again."

Then they came upon a miniature of Volumnia Webster when she was a child of five years, and the clockmaker looked at it a long time, now admiring the eager little face, and now examining with genuine approval the delicate workmanship of the gold setting.

"That is a beautiful piece of work," he said, enthusiastically. "Any goldsmith might be proud of that."

"You always wished to sell it," she said, sharply. "You have so little sentiment in you."

"So you have told me several times," he replied, without any sign of annoyance.

"But this is the gem of all, Thomas," she said, as she handed him the miniature of a lady. "People said I was like my mother; but that was a libel on my mother's face. When I was young, though, I dare say my eyes were nearly as bright as hers. They are not bright now."

The old man looked up at Volumnia.

"No, they are not bright now," he said, critically.

He laid the picture aside without any further remark; but he must needs have noticed that selfsame pleading expression of countenance and that half-puzzled look, as though something in life had troubled the little lady, and all her ingenuity could not avail to set her mind at rest.

"This is old Peter Goodwin," said Volumnia Webster: "he was my mother's grandfather. I always think his quaint green coat, and his brown fiddle, and his grey wig, go well together. I am very proud of Peter Goodwin."

"You were always proud of your ancestors," growled the clockmaker. "For my own part, I am quite thankful I never had any. But there, I do not grudge them

to you. As I said before, every one must have a hobby, and ancestors are not expensive, all things considered."

As she spoke, she took from off the table the miniature of a young boy, and slipped it into her lap, thinking that she had been unobserved.

"What are you hiding from me?" he asked. "I do not want to rob you of your family treasures, and it is not kind of you to mistrust me."

"It never even entered my head, Thomas," she said, eagerly, "and I only wished to spare you pain. If you must see, look!"

And she put the picture gently in his hands, and bent over him without speaking a word.

"We had not many reasons to be proud of our descendant, Volumnia," he said, bitterly. "He promised well in the picture, did he not? But he did not make a very great thing of life. He had fine notions, derived from your ancestors, Volumnia. But it was not a very aristocratic ending to die in a drunken brawl. Here, take your picture. Your love for that boy was so great that you shut me out in the cold. All your thoughts were for him."

"Ah! you were always so hard," said the little old lady passionately.

"Well, leave that matter alone now," rejoined the clockmaker, banging on the table with his fist.

All at once, some one knocked softly at the shop-door, and Volumnia said:

"I think I heard a knock at the shop-door."

"Nonsense!" returned her husband. "Your ears are too sharp."

"And I have always thought yours were too dull, Thomas," the little lady replied. "Well, as you do not stir, I will go to the shop-door."

When she opened it, she found a man sitting on the doorstep. "Did you knock?" she asked, as he rose and stood before her.

"Yes," he answered: "I took that liberty Yours was the only light I saw in the village. I have been walking so many miles, and it is such a fearful night. I rested on your doorstep, and I could not resist the temptation of knocking."

She beckoned him into the shop.

"You are drenched with rain," she said kindly. "Come into the kitchen, and you shall warm yourself and be made welcome."

As he leaned against the counter, the rain trickled down his face, and down his torn coat, and from off his fair moustache. He was probably a strolling player, for he carried under his arm a fiddle and a bow wrapped in a green bag, and this was the only part of him which was not drenched, with rain. He was tall, and of slight build; a man of about forty years. His face was that of a sufferer; but there was some kind of humour lingering about his mouth, and about his whole bearing a certain style of which poverty had not been able to rob him.

The little old lady eyed him curiously, though kindly.

"You are in a sorry plight, stranger," she said, as she took his fiddle and laid it gently on the counter. "Ah! do not be afraid: this is not the first time that I have handled a fiddle. I am very glad that you called here for shelter. We would not wish to turn any one away on such a night as this."

"I looked in at your window," he said, half-dreamily. "I saw you bending over something; and just for the moment I almost felt as if I were coming to some one I knew. That made it easy for me to knock."

¶

SHE led the way into the kitchen, and turning to her husband, she said:

"Thomas, here is a stranger who seeks our hospitality."

"You are welcome," said the clockmaker, who came towards the stranger. "You are welcome, whoever you are. But what the devil are you doing out on such a night as this?"

"Some people have not any home," replied the fiddler, smiling. "I happen to be one of those unlucky individuals."

The clockmaker laughed.

"Rest in the settle yonder, and warm yourself," he said, "and my wife will prepare our supper. For my part, I am hungry; and—you will excuse me being personal—but you look starving."

"That's just what I am," replied the fiddler, sinking back into the settle. "But, upon my word, we homeless, supperless, creatures become accustomed to our state. We even learn to be merry over our misfortunes. Now, I ask you to look at my coat. Is there not humour in it?"

"There are a good many holes in it," said Volumnia Webster, laughing. "And it is as damp as it can be. Take it off and let me dry it."

"It is not much of a coat," said the stranger, brightly. "Now you would not believe it, would you, but I was a dandy once! I used to pride myself on being well-dressed; and my shirt-fronts were something to behold and wonder at! My boots were of the newest fashion, and the cut of my coat was absolutely faultless. However, that is all of the past."

"Precisely," remarked the clockmaker, who had put one his spectacles to examine the new-comer. Then he added:

"Have you come a long way to-night?"

"Yes," replied the stranger, frankly; "and I have completely lost my bearings. "Not that it particularly matters where I do go, for times are bad everywhere for us strolling fiddlers. People like to listen, but they do not like to pay! Well, I can partly sympathise: I myself never cared about paying for anything! It is a habit some people have."

"By the way," said Volumnia Webster, as she cut up the bacon and put it into the frying-pan, "I left your fiddle lying on the counter; it must be damp. Perhaps you will fetch it, Thomas; and I will give it a good toasting: not to scorch it, but just to prevent all chances of rheumatism. That is what my father, the naval captain, used to do."

"Confound the naval captain!" growled the clockmaker, half to himself, as he rose to fetch the fiddle.

"My father, the naval captain," continued the little old lady, "was fond of music, and he played a little on the fiddle yonder, that dirty old thing hanging against the wall. I shall show it to you later on."

"I should like to play on it," said the stranger, eagerly.

"And so you shall," she answered, kindly. "Thank you, Thomas: give the stranger's fiddle to me."

She took it from its bag, and warmed it at a discreet distance from the fire; she turned it over, and examined it, smiling half-mournfully, as though sad memories were forcing themselves upon her mind.

"It is quite a common instrument," said the stranger, who had been watching her with interest; "but I used to have a beautiful one in the days when I was prosperous. That was a good long time ago now. I did not then think that I should become a strolling player, making music for children and maidens to dance to, and men to drink to. I had ambitions then."

"And you have no ambition now?" asked Volumnia Webster, taking down the toasting-fork from the right-hand side of the fireplace.

"Yes," he laughed, jumping up from the settle; "my ambition is to help you to toast those slices of bread. I am a famous toaster."

She put the fork into his hand, resigning to him without hesitation, the office of toaster. There was something genial about his manner, which communicated itself even to the clockmaker and his wife, and found response in them. It was impossible not to feel drawn towards him, for he had that in him which claimed and secured a sympathetic welcome. The little old lady saw that it gave him pleasure to help her; so she asked him to place the chairs to the supper-table, and fetch the dish from off the dresser.

"You cannot think what a comfort it is to be in this cheerful kitchen," he said, as he helped to put the bacon into the dish. "Only those who have been out into the darkness of the night, can appreciate the warmth and glow of a red fire, and the kindness of those who welcome wanderers to that red fire. It is ever so long since I have been into a home. I had almost forgotten what a fireside looked like; and it is quite a luxury to be treated as one still having some hold on humanity. That alone is almost as good as the supper which you are preparing. I do not say that it precisely drives away hunger, but it does drive away the blues."

In a few minutes the three were seated at the table: the guest ate heartily of the bacon and sausages, and made short work of the toast and Dutch cheese, and did not spare the home-made jam, which he declared was a relish not frequently finding its way into his life.

"That pot of jam is no safer with me than it would be with a schoolboy," he said, turning to his hostess, who was smiling to see her guest so happy. The clockmaker, too, was amused; he kept the stranger's coffee-cup well filled, and seemed altogether in an excellent humour.

"That puts warmth into a man," the fiddler said, leaning back contentedly in his chair. "I feel alive again. One does not have a supper like this every day, I can tell you. The strolling player must take what he can get, and sometimes he cannot get anything at all! Then he must

play his tune to himself, and take that for food and drink; he must live on that, or starve on that: and what do you think, sir—the sooner he starves to death the better?"

"It all depends upon the nature of the person. The world might be the poorer or the richer for his death," remarked the clockmaker, as he poured the steaming coffee into his saucer and blew on it. "But so far as their own wishes are concerned, most people cling to life. For my own part, although I am an oldish man, I wish to live as long as I can hold together; and it is not because I am particularly happy. Volumnia, my wife, gives me twenty years of life, if I am careful. What do you think of her judgment?"

The stranger laughed.

"I should not say you were very strong," he answered; "but you probably have more life in your little finger than I have in my whole body. And then, of course, you have more chances of taking care of yourself than I have. I am not in a position to consult the weather, for instance; and you are."

"Thomas has a delicate throat," interposed Volumnia Webster; "otherwise I have no fears for him. He is particularly anxious to live a long time; for to-morrow he and I part. And such few years as may remain to us, we shall spend as each of us thinks fit."

"What an odd idea!" exclaimed the stranger.

"Not at all," remarked the clockmaker, gruffly; "the only odd part of it is, that we did not come to the determination before, but have waited thirty-five years before making up our minds."

"And I suppose you think that if you wait much longer it will be too late," suggested the stranger. "The time does slip away so stealthily, does it not?"

He suddenly rose from the table.

"If this is the case," he said, "I have already intruded too long. You cannot want a stranger here on your last evening."

"On the contrary," replied the clockmaker, lighting his pipe, "we are very glad to have you: we were not particularly happy before you arrived. Your coming here has been a pleasure. Do not hurry away, but light your pipe, and draw nearer to the fire, and tell us something about yourself."

"There are two serious obstacles to your first invitation," said the fiddler: "I have no pipe and no tobacco."

"Here are both," replied the little old lady.

"And as for your third invitation," continued the stranger, smiling his thanks to the clockmaker's wife, "I doubt whether you would be particularly pleased with my history. It is not that of a hero. Indeed I am a most unheroic person. Why, people said I killed my mother; but I myself have never believed in the theory of broken hearts. Does grief kill?"

"No," replied the clockmaker, gruffly, "it does not kill."

"Yes," replied Volumnia Webster. "It brings death to the soul. I know that well, for my own heart has been dead these many years. Our son struck the blow. I wonder whether he spoke as lightly as you speak."

The clockmaker frowned, and made a gesture of impatience.

"Do let the past alone to-night, Volumnia," he said, sternly. "On the morrow, when I leave you, you may do as you please about mourning over a dead rogue. But now it would be more useful if you cleared away the supper things."

The little old lady's bright eyes flashed indignantly, and her slight frame trembled with well-controlled anger; but she gave no answer, and merely busied herself with carrying out the clockmaker's suggestion, whilst the fiddler rested in the settle, smoking his pipe. But when the clockmaker took up some watches which he had been repairing, and left the kitchen, the fiddler rose to help her.

"That was rather rough on you," he said kindly, "and it was entirely my fault. And I believe you are suffering. My mother used to suffer like that when she pleaded for me with my father, and I used to laugh. But that was long ago. I do not laugh now."

"He never understood the boy," Volumnia Webster burst out passionately. "The boy took after my family: he was of a highly wrought temperament, and of an artistic disposition, and his father, who, as you see, came from a lower sphere, could not appreciate a nature so unlike his own. He told the lad time after time that he was a rogue, and would go straight to the dogs. Never a day passed but that cruel words were spoken between them. He was capable of much good; he had generous instincts. He meant well, but he was easily led

away. There was one man of all men who dragged him down. I would sacrifice all the remaining years of my life if I could stand face to face with that man. It would be too merciful to kill him; but I could curse him living, curse him dying, and curse him dead. His name is in my heart; I treasure it there for very hatred."

She put her hands over her face. The stranger seemed lost in thought. His own thin-drawn face wore a troubled expression. He held his pipe listlessly in his hand. He shivered.

When at last she looked up, he had regained his composure.

"You would not wonder at my words," she said, sadly, "if you understood how mothers love their sons. But you sons cannot understand: you laugh. And I daresay my boy laughed too. Ah, well, he was a handsome lad, the real gentleman in manner and appearance. If he had lived, he would have become the very image of my father, the naval captain. That used to irritate my husband, for he could not bear to think that I had belonged to a sphere utterly different from his own. And yet such was the case. In the old days when I lived in my father's house, I was surrounded by gentlefolk, people of culture and refinement and talent. That all seems to me a dream now, and I have to look at the fiddle yonder to remember that these things have been. But I weary you. What is all this to you?"

"It is my pleasure to hear you," the fiddler said, eagerly. "It is so long since any one has thought it worth while to talk to me. As I told you before, it is a perfect luxury to be treated like a human being. You were talking about spheres: well, I have fallen out of my original one—or, to be rather more accurate, I was kicked out! I sinned against the world, and the world has had its revenge in never giving me the chance of beginning all over again. At first I thought it was deuced hard. Now I have learnt to shrug my shoulders, and laugh."

"Do you always laugh?" asked Volumnia Webster, touching him on the arm.

He paused.

"No," he answered, "there are times when I do not laugh. There are times, too, when I fancy that if, somewhere or other, there could be spared to me just a little of love and sympathy, out of the mass of love and sympathy throbbing in the world's heart, I should yet try to begin all over again. There is nothing more awful than loneliness of life and soul; nothing more deadening than to feel that no one cares whether you fare ill or well, whether you die by the wayside, or whether you live to reach the next village. By Heaven! When you and your husband talk of parting on the morrow, you do not know what you say. Forgive me if I have said too much. I have no right to act the preacher to any one; but there is irony in the whole situation: a home, a red fire, and every appearance of comfort—and no happiness!"

"To make happiness," said Volumnia Webster, half to herself, "sympathy is necessary, and I have wanted sympathy all my life long. I have not been a happy woman: the months, the years, going by and bringing joy to some people, never brought joy to me. Well, well: the fire is burning low, stranger; oblige me by piling on the logs. Thomas likes to see a cheerful fire. I must just go and fetch his overcoat, which wants mending; and then, perhaps, you will give us a little music on your fiddle."

"Certainly," said the stranger, as he put on the logs.

¶

THE black cat sitting on the hearth watched him with eager green eyes, and probably coming to the conclusion that he was a friend of the family, showed approval of his presence by an outburst of purring. The stranger stroked his sleek coat, and then gently rolled him over and played with him.

"You will have a bad time shortly," he said to the cat, "for I am going to fiddle. Perhaps, though, I shall charm you, after the fashion of the celebrated Orpheus, of whom you may, perchance, have heard."

At that moment the clockmaker came into the kitchen.

"I have done all my work," he said, cheerily, "and I leave everything in excellent order, so that to-morrow I shall start my new life with an easy conscience. My wife tells me you will give us a tune. I dearly love a tune, though she declares I am not fond of music. It is wonderful how a wife settles a thing of that sort. By the way, stranger, I expect you have been hearing all about the naval captain! I have never been able to get free of that man, though he

died many years ago! Woe unto the man whose wife has relations in the navy!"

"Or the army!" laughed the fiddler, taking his fiddle out of the green bag. "You should be grateful for small mercies. The navy may irritate a man's throat, but the army generally chokes him!"

"You are quite a puzzle to me," said the clockmaker, watching his guest with obvious interest. "You have the bearing and the speech of what people call a gentleman, and yet you are a strolling fiddler, homeless, and possibly penniless."

"Excuse me, sir," interposed the stranger, with a smile; "I am the happy possessor of exactly fourpence-halfpenny. Lest you doubt me, here they are."

"I own that I am curious about you," resumed the clockmaker.

"I will satisfy your curiosity," said the stranger good-naturedly, nodding to the little lady, who had brought her work, and was now sitting in the settle near her husband.

He stood before them, thrumming the strings of his fiddle.

"I can't think why the deuce you are going to part to-morrow," he said. "When you have heard my edifying story, you will say I am *bad*. But when I look at you both, I believe you are *mad*. Well, that is neither here nor there. With regard to myself, I have made a hash of my life. I chose my own path. And so I can blame no one except myself. When I was doing penal servitude for forgery, my mother died, they said of a broken heart. We have already discussed that matter. When I came out again, I thought I would try to raise myself, just for the sake of her memory. It was rather late to think of that, wasn't it? I looked about for a livelihood, and, of course, I looked in vain. Then I remembered my fiddle; for in the days gone by I had been considered a brilliant player. I tried to get pupils; but the story of my life spread about, and my pupils left me. I played for a few weeks in a theatre orchestra; and there, too, my history became known, and I was obliged to go. I played with a harpist in the streets of London. One day he called me a cursed convict, and refused to work with me. So now, turned off by every one, I play alone. May I still stay with you, or must I go? Most people tell me to go. It is not possible to hurt my feelings now; so I beg of you to be frank, and to decide just as your fancy dictates."

Neither of them answered. Volumnia and Thomas Webster stared into the fire as though they were seeing sad pictures. There were tears in the little old lady's eyes, and the clockmaker looked distressed.

"Then I will go," said the fiddler, just a little sadly. He had left off thrumming the strings of his fiddle.

"No," said the old man, kindly, "still stay with us: you are our guest; we made you welcome, and you are still welcome. I only paused because your words made me think of my son, who was killed in a drunken brawl fifteen years ago. If he had lived, would his life had been like yours, I wonder? We must give you a helping hand, stranger, for his sake. What do you say, Volumnia?"

"That would be my wish," said Volumnia Webster, earnestly.

The fiddler bent down and reverently kissed her hand.

"I have not heard such kind words for years," he said. "I feel a different man for them. They will make everything easier for me. And now for some music," he added, cheerily. "'Fit audience let me have, though few.' I am nothing of a musician now, you know. The music generally required at country inns does not reach a very high standard: it is not precisely classical. So do not be critical. I think I shall play you a may-pole dance."

Perhaps he was nothing of a player, but he knew how to make his fiddle speak to the old couple resting in the settle. He had forgotten them. He was standing on the village-green fiddling for the May-pole dancers. Perhaps he heard the village-folk cry "Faster, faster, fiddler!" for he perpetually increased his speed, and did not seem to tire. But now these merry notes died away, giving place to a gentle melody, such as would linger in the listener's memory. The fiddle sang, and sobbed and sobbed again.

The clockmaker started as though he were pierced.

"Volumnia," he whispered, uneasily, "where have I heard that music? Ah! I know. I have heard it these many years, and sometimes, when I have refused to listen, I have heard it all the same. Why, it was the little piece our boy wrote for my birthday greeting. You have it safe, Volumnia? Tell me, Volumnia, am I dreaming?"

"No dear, you are not dreaming," she answered. "That is the very music our

boy wrote. You remember how proud we were! We had such hopes for him, hadn't we? He was so talented in every way. Poor Ralph!"

"How all the past returns, Volumnia," he whispered, "until everything has become the past!"

His head rested on her shoulder, and her hand fondled those grey curls, fondled so often in the days gone by.

All unconsciously the stranger had put them under a spell, the spell of the past. They had forgotten him and his personality: they only heard the music.

The stranger ceased playing, and, looking up, saw how the clockmaker rested like a tired child, and how his wife was fondling those grey curls. He saw that they had both forgotten him.

"And naturally too," he said to himself, "for I have no claim on their remembrance. I have intruded on them long enough as it is, and now I must go out into the darkness of the night, and again take up my loneliness."

He glanced round the cosy kitchen, at the red fire, at the quaint clock, at the copper warming-pan, at the dresser stocked with old china. Everything spoke to him of a home. He was glad to have seen one again; the remembrance would be pleasant to him. Just as he was putting his fiddle into the green bag the string broke with a loud clang, and Volumnia Webster woke from her reverie.

"Ah! you there!" she said. "Tell me how you knew that music: why did you choose that to play to us? I must know why you chose that."

He wondered at their eagerness to know.

"I seem to be telling you all my secrets to-night," he said, smiling sadly. "If confession is good for the soul, then my soul has gained something to-night. You spoke of that man who had dragged your son down. Your words sank deep into my heart, for they reminded me of what I had done in a similar way to a young fellow as full of promise as your son might have been. And I suppose I was thinking of *him* when I played that melody; for he wrote it, and I was the first to play it to him. I always thought it was a beautiful melody."

The clockmaker started up, and put his hand roughly on the stranger's arm.

"You knew him, then?" he asked, excitedly.

"Knew him?" laughed the fiddler. "Why, we were inseparable! He was my shadow. I could do anything with him—twist him round my finger—twirl him just as I pleased. He was rare good company, too—could sing a rattling song with any one; full of wit and fun. Heavens! how he made us fellows laugh! Why, he was the wildest of——"

The fiddler stopped suddenly: the little old lady was leaning over the back of a chair glaring at him, just like a tigress preparing to spring; the clockmaker was standing a few steps off, his arms tightly folded together, and his face working like the face of a man who is trying to make up his mind about something or other, trying to puzzle out some mystery.

"What is the matter with you both?" the fiddler asked, nervously. "Have I done anything wrong? Have I said anything to hurt your feelings?"

A wild cry broke from the little old lady's lips. She rushed to the cupboard in the recess, pulled out some papers and threw them on the table She turned them over with trembling hands, and at last found the packet she required. She tore it open, and took out the faded photograph of a young man. She held it up for the fiddler to see.

¶

"WAS that anything like your friend whom you dragged down to hell?" she hissed out.

The stranger started back as though he had been struck. His face was deadly pale.

"My God!" he cried. "That *was* the very man—Ralph Webster!"

The photograph dropped from her hand.

"Then at last," she said, slowly, "we stand face to face with our son's worst enemy. It was worth while living to see him like this: an outcast from every home!"

The stranger bowed his head. He tried to speak, but the words would not come.

"Go!" said the clockmaker, touching him roughly on the shoulder, and pointing to the door. "This is no resting-place for you."

The stranger took up fiddle and bow and green bag, and crept to the door. The rain was still pelting against the windows, and the wind was still howling its dismal story. He paused just by the door, hoping against all hope that the little old lady would relent,

and say one word of kind dismissal. If ever a human face was eloquent with pleading, his face was eloquent at that last moment.

"What are you waiting for?" she asked, sternly. "Go before my tongue is loosened."

He swung open the door, went into the shop, and unlocked the shop-door, which banged mournfully after him as he passed out into the darkness of the wild night.

When he had gone, Volumnia Webster's composure broke down, and she sank into the settle and wept bitterly. The clockmaker bent over her, and comforted her, taking the little tear-stained face in his hands and kissing it.

"Volumnia," he whispered, "we have been drawn very near to each other to-night."

And she smiled to hear his words. She watched him pick up the photograph and put it back into the cupboard; and she watched him fix his pipe on the rack which hung over the bellows, and she saw him throw his favourite tools into their accustomed drawer. The clock struck twelve.

"You have a long journey to go on the morrow, Thomas," she said, "and you ought to be getting to rest. I must stay up a little longer yet to finish your overcoat."

"Never mind that," he answered, as he took the coat from her hands; "I am not going on a journey either to-morrow or any other day. I shall stay here with you, Volumnia, and live my twenty years here. The fiddler was right in saying that we were mad. May I stop, Volumnia? I could not bear to part from you now."

And she bade him stay always, promising him half-humorously that the naval captain should not worry him more than was absolutely necessary. And she spoke of the fiddler and his loneliness: she said she could never forget that pleading look on his face as he stood by the door waiting for one kind word; she realized now that all his future hung at that moment in the balance; she regretted his hasty dismissal; she recalled the words he had spoken about the value of affection, and how he should have wished to begin all over again if a little human sympathy could have been granted to him: she forgot that he was a man whose name she had been cherishing in her memory for very hatred; she only remembered that he was a wretched wanderer, whom she had sent out into the darkness of the night. All the pity that was in the depths of her heart, rose up.

"Let us call him back, Thomas," she said, eagerly. "Let us give him the helping hand we promised him before we knew who he was."

So they opened the shop-door, and they shouted his name:

"Mark Weston, Mark Weston! come back to us! We shall welcome you as we welcomed you before. We have only forgiveness and kindness for you. Come back, Mark Weston!"

But there was no answer.

"We want to help you, Mark Weston," the little old lady cried. "Come to us!"

The wind and the rain gave reply; the fiddler gave none.

"No one could hear in such a storm," said the clockmaker. "It is of no use."

They shut the shop-door reluctantly, and returned to the kitchen, and trimmed the lamp and put it in the window; and they sat talking over the fire: talking about their young days, and about Ralph, and the fiddler.

"When the fiddler sees the light, he will come back," they said to each other.

They waited until the day broke, and the storm was hushed in sleep, and the fire died out.

But the fiddler did not come back.

THE ARGOSY VOTING COMPETITION

WE again offer two prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the readers who send in the titles of the four best stories in the order of merit which most nearly coincides with the votes of the majority. Stories must be selected from this issue.

Entries should be made on postcards addressed to: "Vote," THE ARGOSY, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, E.C.4, and sent in by August 26, 1927. The result will be announced in THE ARGOSY for NOVEMBER, on sale October 7, 1927.

We have pleasure in awarding One Guinea each to: Miss MABEL CALVERT, 43, Nansen Street, Stretford, Manchester, and Miss A. BLACKWELL, Manor Road, Swinton, Near Rotherham, who share the first prize, and One Guinea to: Miss E. G. PHILLIPS, 120, Knollys Road, Streatham, S.W.16, as the result of the voting in the competition for July.

Tricotrin Entertains

The comedy of an avuncular visit

By LEONARD MERRICK

ONE night when Pitou went home, an unaccustomed perfume floated to meet him on the stairs. He climbed them in amazement.

" If we lived in an age of miracles, I should conclude that Tricotrin was smoking a cigar," he said to himself. " What can it be ? "

The pair occupied a garret in the rue des Trois Frères at this time, where their window, in sore need of repairs, commanded an unrivalled view of the dirty steps descending to the passage des Abbesses. To-night, behold Tricotrin pacing the garret with dignity, between his lips an Havannah that could have cost no less than a franc. The composer rubbed his eyes.

" Have they made you an Academician ? " he stammered. " Or has your uncle, the silk manufacturer, died and left you his business ? "

" My friend," replied the poet, " prepare yourself forthwith for ' a New and Powerful Serial of the Most Absorbing Interest ' ! I am no longer the young man who went out this evening—I am a celebrity."

" I thought," said the composer, " that it couldn't be you when I saw the cigar."

" Figure yourself," continued Tricotrin, " that at nine o'clock I was wandering on the Grand Boulevard with a thirst that could have consumed a brewery. I might mention that I had also empty pockets, but——"

" It would be to pad the powerful Serial shamelessly," said Pitou ; " there are things that one takes for granted."

" At the corner of the place de l'Opéra a fellow passed me whom I knew and yet did not know ; I could not recall where it was we had met. I turned and followed him, racking my brains the while. Suddenly I remembered——"

" Pardon me," interrupted the composer, " but I have read ' Bel-Ami ' myself. Oh, it is quite evident that you are a celebrity—you have already forgotten how to be original ! "

" There is a resemblance, it is true," admitted Tricotrin. " However, Maupassant had no copyright in the place de l'Opéra. I say that I remembered the man ; I had known him when he was in the advertisement business in Lyons. Well, we have supped together ; he is in a position to do me a service—he will ask an editor to publish an Interview with me ! "

" An Interview ? " exclaimed Pitou. " You are to be Interviewed ? Ah, no, my poor friend, too much meat has unhinged your reason ! Go to sleep—you will be hungry and sane again to-morrow."

" It will startle some of them, hein ? ' Gustave Tricotrin at Home '—in the illustrated edition of *Le Demi-Mot* ? "

" Illustrated ? " gasped Pitou. He looked round the attic. " Did I understand you to say ' illustrated ' ? "

" Well, well," said Tricotrin, " we shall move the beds ! And, when the concierge nods, perhaps we can borrow the palm from the portals. With a palm and an amiable photographer, an air of splendour is easily arrived at. I should like a screen—we will raise one from a studio in the rue Ravignan. Mon Dieu ! with a palm and a screen I foresee the most opulent effects. ' A Corner of the Study '—we can put the screen in front of the washhand-stand, and litter the table with manuscripts—you will admit that we have a sufficiency of manuscripts ?—no one will know that they have all been rejected. Also, a painter in the rue Ravignan might lend us a few of his failures—' Before you go, let me show you my pictures,' said Monsieur Tricotrin : ' I am an ardent collector ' ! "

In Montmartre the sight of two " types " shifting household goods makes no sensation—the sails of the remaining windmills still revolve. On the day that it had its likeness taken, the attic was temporarily transformed. At least a score of unappreciated master-pieces concealed the dilapidation of the walls ; the broken window was decorated with an Eastern fabric that had been a

cherished " property " of half the ateliers in Paris ; the poet himself—with the palm drooping gracefully above his head—mused in a massive chair, in which Solomon had been pronouncing judgment until twelve-fifteen, when the poet had called for it. The appearance of exhaustion, observed by admirers of the poet's portrait, was due to the chair's appalling weight. As he staggered under it up the steps of the passage des Abbesses, the young man had feared he would expire on the threshold of his fame.

However, the photographer proved as resourceful as could be desired, and perhaps the most striking feature of the illustration was the spaciousness of the apartment in which Monsieur Tricotrin was presented to readers of *Le Demi-Mot*. The name of the thoroughfare was not obtruded.

With what pride was that issue regarded in the rue des Trois Frères !

" Aha ! " cried Tricotrin, who in moments persuaded himself that he really occupied such noble quarters, " those who repudiated me in the days of my struggles will be a little repentant now, hein ? Stone Heart will discover that I was not wrong in relying on my genius ! "

" I assume," said Pitou, " that ' Stone Heart ' is your newest pet-name for the silk-manufacturing uncle ? "

" You catch my meaning precisely. I propose to send a copy of the paper to Lyons, with the Interview artistically bordered by laurels ; I cannot draw laurels myself, but there are plenty of persons who can. We will find someone to do it when we palter with starvation at the Café du Bel Avenir this evening—or perhaps we had better fast at the Lucullus Junior, instead ; there is occasionally some ink in the bottle there. I shall put the address in the margin —my uncle will not know where it is, and on the grounds of euphony I have no fault to find with it. It would not surprise me if I received an affectionate letter and a bank-note in reply—the perversity of human nature delights in generosities to the prosperous."

" It is a fact," said Pitou. " That human nature ! "

" Who knows ?—he may even renew the allowance that he used to make me ! "

" Upon my word, more unlikely things have happened," Pitou conceded.

" Mon Dieu, Nicolas, we shall again have enough to eat ! "

" Ah, visionary ! " exclaimed Pitou ; " are there no bounds to your imagination ? "

Now, the perversity to which the poet referred did inspire Monsieur Rigaud, of Lyons, to loosen his purse-strings. He wrote that he rejoiced to learn that Gustave was beginning to make his way, and enclosed a present of two-hundred-and-fifty francs. More, after an avuncular preamble which the poet skipped—having a literary hatred of digression in the works of others—he even hinted that the allowance might be resumed.

What a banquet there was in bohemia ! How the glasses jingled afterwards in La Lune Rousse, and oh, the beautiful hats that Germaine and Marcelle displayed on the next fine Sunday ! Even when the last ripples of the splash were stilled, the comrades swaggered gallantly on the Boulevard Rochechouart, for by any post might not the first instalment of that allowance arrive ?

Weeks passed ; and Tricotrin began to say : " It looks to me as if we needed another Interview ! "

And then came a letter which was no less cordial than its predecessors, but which stunned the unfortunate recipient like a warrant for his execution. Monsieur Rigaud stated that business would bring him to Paris on the following evening and that he anticipated the pleasure of visiting his nephew ; he trusted that his dear Gustave would meet him at the station. The poet and composer stared at each other with bloodless faces.

" You must call at his hotel instead," faltered Pitou at last.

" But you may be sure he will wish to see my elegant abode."

" ' It is in the hands of the decorators. How unfortunate ! ' "

" He would propose to offer them suggestions ; he is a born suggester."

" Fever is raging in the house—a most infectious fever — we will ask a medical student to give us one."

" It would not explain my lodging in a slum meanwhile."

" Well, let us admit that there is nothing to be done ; you will have to own up ! "

" Are you insane ? It is improvident youths like you who come to lament their wasted lives. If I could receive him this once as he expects to be received, we cannot doubt that it would mean an income of two-thousand francs to me. Prosperity

dangles before us—shall I fail to clutch it? Mon Dieu, what a catastrophe, his coming to Paris! Why cannot he conduct his business in Lyons? Is there not enough money in the city of Lyons to satisfy him? O grasper! what greed! Nicolas, my more than brother, if it were night when I took him to a sumptuous apartment, he might not notice the name of the street—I could talk brilliantly as we turned the corner. Also I could scintillate as I led him away. He would never know that it was not the rue des Trois Frères."

"You are right," agreed Pitou; "but which is the pauper in our social circle whose sumptuous apartment you propose to acquire?"

"One must consider," said Tricotrin. "Obviously, I am compelled to entertain in somebody's; fortunately, I have two days to find it in. I shall now go forth!"

It was a genial morning, and the first person he accosted in the rue Ravignan was Goujaud, painting in the patch of garden before the studios. "Tell me, Goujaud," exclaimed the poet, "have you any gilded acquaintance who would permit me the use of his apartment for two hours to-morrow evening?"

Goujaud reflected for some seconds, with his head to one side. "I have never done anything so fine as this before," he observed; "regard the atmosphere of it!"

"It is execrable!" replied Tricotrin, and went next door to Flamant. "My old one," he explained, "I have urgent need of a regal apartment for two hours to-morrow—have you a wealthy friend who would accommodate me?"

"You may beautify your bedroom with all my possessions," returned Flamant heartily. "I have a stuffed parrot that is most decorative, but I have not a friend that is wealthy."

"You express yourself like a First Course for the Foreigner," said Trictorin, much annoyed. "Devil take your stuffed parrot!"

The heat of the sun increased towards midday, and drops began to trickle under the young man's hat. By four o'clock he had called upon sixty-two persons, exclusive of Sanquereau, whom he had been unable to wake. He bethought himself of Lajeunie, the novelist; but Lajeunie could offer him nothing more serviceable than a pass for the Elysée-Montmartre. "Now how is it possible that I spend my life among such imbeciles?" groaned the unhappy poet; "one offers me a parrot, and another a pass for a dancing-hall! Can I assure my uncle, who is a married man, and produces silk in vast quantities, that I reside in a dancing-hall? Besides, we know those passes—they are available only for ladies."

"It is true that you could not get in by it," assented Lajeunie, "but I give it to you freely. Take it, my poor fellow! Though it may appear inadequate to the occasion, who knows but what it will prove to be the basis of a fortune?"

"You are as crazy as the stories you write," said Tricotrin. "Still, it can go in my pocket." And he made, exhausted, for a bench in the place Dancourt, where he apostrophised his fate.

¶

THUS occupied, he fell asleep; and presently a young woman sauntered from the sidewalk across the square. In the shady little place Dancourt is the little white Théâtre Montmartre, and she first perused the play-bill, and then contemplated the sleeping poet. It may have been that she found something attractive in his bearing, or it may have been that ragamuffins sprawled elsewhere; but, having determined to wait awhile, she selected the bench on which he reposed, and forthwith woke him.

"Now this is nice!" he exclaimed, realising his lapse with a start.

"Oh, monsieur!" said she, blushing.

"Pardon; I referred to my having dozed when every moment is of consequence," he explained. "And yet," he went on ruefully, "upon my soul, I cannot conjecture where I shall go next!"

Her response was so sympathetic that it tempted him to remain a little longer, and in five minutes she was recounting her own perplexities. It transpired that she was a lady's-maid with a holiday, and the problem before her was whether to spend her money on a theatre or on a ball.

"Now that is a question which is disposed of instantly," said Tricotrin. "You shall spend your money on a theatre, and go to a ball as well." And out fluttered the pink pass presented to him by Lajeunie.

The girl's tongue was as lively as her gratitude. She was, she told him, maid to the famous Colette Aubray, who had gone unattended that afternoon to visit the owner of a villa in the country, where she would stay until the next day but one.

" So you see, monsieur, we poor servants are left alone in the flat to amuse ourselves as best we can ! "

" Mon Dieu ! " ejaculated Tricotrin, and added mentally : " It was decidedly the good kind fairies that pointed to this bench ! "

He proceeded to pay the young woman such ardent attentions that she assumed he meant to accompany her to the ball, and her disappointment was extreme when he had to own that the state of his finances forbade it. " All I can suggest, my dear Léonie," he concluded, " is that I shall be your escort when you leave. It is abominable that you must have other partners in the meantime, but I feel that you will be constant to me in your thoughts. I shall have much to tell you—I shall whisper a secret in your ear ; for, incredible as it may sound, my sweet child, you alone in Paris have the power to save me ! "

" Oh, monsieur ! " faltered the admiring lady's-maid, " it has always been my great ambition to save a young man, especially a young man who uses such lovely language. I am sure, by the way you talk, that you must be a poet ! "

" Extraordinary," mused Tricotrin, " that all the world recognises me as a poet, excepting when it reads my poetry ! " And this led him to reflect that he must sell some of it, in order to provide refreshment for Léonie before he begged her aid. Accordingly, he arranged to meet her when the ball finished, and limped back to the attic, where he made up a choice assortment of his wares.

He had resolved to try the office of *Le Demi-Mot* ; but his reception there was cold. " You should not presume on our good nature," demurred the Editor ; " only last month we had an article on you, saying that you were highly talented, and now you ask us to publish your work besides. There must be a limit to such things."

He examined the collection, nevertheless, with a depreciatory countenance, and offered ten francs for three of the finest specimens. " From *Le Demi-Mot* I would counsel you to accept low terms," he said, with engaging interest, " on account of the prestige you derive from appearing in it."

" In truth it is a noble thing, prestige," admitted Trictorin ; " but, monsieur, I have never known a man able to make a meal of it when he was starving, or to warm himself before it when he was without a fire. Still—though it is a jumble-sale price—let them go ! "

" Payment will be made in due course," said the Editor, and became immersed in correspondence.

Tricotrin paled to the lips, and the next five minutes were terrible ; indeed, he did not doubt that he would have to limp elsewhere. At last he cried : " Well, let us say seven francs, cash ! Seven francs in one's fist are worth ten in due course." And thus the bargain was concluded.

" It was well for Hercules that none of his labours was the extraction of payment from an editor ! " panted the poet on the doorstep. But he was now enabled to fête the lady's-maid in grand style, and—not to be outdone in generosity—she placed Mademoiselle Aubray's flat at his disposal directly he asked for it.

" You have accomplished a miracle ! " averred Pitou, in the small hours, when he heard the news.

Tricotrin waved a careless hand. " To a man of resource all things are possible ! " he murmured.

The next evening the silk manufacturer was warmly embraced on the platform, and not a little surprised to learn that his nephew expected a visit at once. However, the young man's consternation was so profound when objections were made that, in the end, they were withdrawn. Tricotrin directed the driver after Monsieur Rigaud was in the cab, and, on their reaching the courtyard, there was Léonie, all frills, ready to carry the handbag.

" Your servant ? " inquired Monsieur Rigaud, with some disapproval, as they went upstairs ; " she is rather fancifully dressed, hein ? "

" Is it so ? " answered Tricotrin. " Perhaps a bachelor is not sufficiently observant in these matters. Still, she is an attentive domestic. Take off your things, my dear uncle, and make yourself at home. What joy it gives me to see you here ! "

" Mon Dieu," exclaimed the silk manufacturer, looking about him, " you have a place fit for a prince ! It must have cost a pretty penny."

" Between ourselves," said Trictorin, " I often reproach myself for what I spent on it ; I could make very good use to-day of some of the money I squandered."

" What curtains ! " murmured Monsieur Rigaud, fingering the silk, enraptured.

" The quality is superb ! What may they have charged you for these curtains ? "

" It was years ago—upon my word I do not remember," drawled Tricotrin, who had no idea whether he ought to say five hundred francs, or five thousand. " Also, you must not think I have bought everything you see—many of the pictures and bronzes are presents from admirers of my work. It is gratifying, hein ? "

" I—I—— To confess the truth, we had not heard of your triumphs," admitted Monsieur Rigaud ; " I did not dream you were so successful."

" Ah, it is in a very modest way," Tricotrin replied. " I am not a millionaire, I assure you ! On the contrary, it is often difficult to make both ends meet—although," he added hurriedly, " I live with the utmost economy, my uncle. The days of my thoughtlessness are past. A man should save, a man should provide for the future."

At this moment he was astonished to see Léonie open the door and announce that dinner was served. She had been even better than her word.

" Dinner ? " cried Monsieur Rigaud. " Ah, now I understand why you were so dejected when I would not come ! "

" Bah, it will be a very simple meal," said his nephew, " but after a journey one must eat. Let us go in." He was turning the wrong way, but Léonie's eye saved him.

" Come," he proceeded, taking his seat, " some soup—some good soup ! What will you drink, my uncle ? "

" On the sideboard I see champagne," chuckled Monsieur Rigaud ; " you treat the old man well, you rogue ! "

" Hah," said Tricotrin, who had not observed it, " the cellar, I own, is an extravagance of mine ! Alone, I drink only mineral waters, or a little claret, much diluted ; but to my dearest friends I must give the dearest wines. Léonie, champagne ! "

It was a capital dinner, and the cigars and cigarettes that Léonie put on the table with the coffee were of the highest excellence. Agreeable conversation wiled away some hours, and Tricotrin began to look for his uncle to get up. But it was raining smartly, and Monsieur Rigaud was reluctant to bestir himself. Another hour lagged by, and at last Tricotrin faltered :

" I fear I must beg you to excuse me for leaving you, my uncle ; it is most annoying, but I am compelled to go out. The fact is I have consented to collaborate with Capus, and he is so eccentric, this dear Alfred—we shall be at work all night."

" Go, my good Gustave," said his uncle readily ; " and, as I am very tired, if you have no objection, I will occupy your bed."

Tricotrin's jaw dropped, and it was by a supreme effort that he stammered how pleased the arrangement would make him. To intensify the fix, Léonie and the cook had disappeared—doubtless to the mansarde in which they slept—and he was left to cope with the catastrophe alone. However, having switched on the lights, he conducted the elderly gentleman to an enticing apartment. He wished him an affectionate " good night," and, after promising to wake him early, made for home, leaving the manufacturer sleepily surveying the room's imperial splendour.

" What magnificence ! " soliloquised Monsieur Rigaud. " What toilet articles ! " He got into bed. " What a coverlet—there must be twenty thousand francs on top of me ! "

He had not slumbered under them long when he was aroused by such a commotion that he feared for the action of his heart. Blinking in the glare, he perceived Léonie in scanty attire, distracted on her knees—and, by the bedside, a beautiful lady in a travelling-cloak, raging with the air of a lioness.

" Go away ! " quavered the manufacturer. " What is the meaning of this intrusion ? "

" Intrusion ? " raved the lady. " That is what you will explain, monsieur ! How comes it that you are in my bed ? "

" Yours ? " ejaculated Monsieur Rigaud. " What is it you say ? You are making a grave error, for which you will apologise, madame ! "

" Ah, hold me back," pleaded the lady, throwing up her eyes, " hold me back or I shall assault him ! " She flung to Léonie : " Wretched girl, you shall pay for this ! Not content with lavishing my champagne and my friend's cigars on your lover, you must put him to recuperate in my room ! "

" Oh ! " gasped the manufacturer, and hid his head under the priceless coverlet. " Such an imputation is unpardonable," he roared, reappearing. " I am Monsieur Rigaud, of Lyons ; the flat belongs to my nephew, Monsieur Tricotrin ; I request you to retire ! "

" Imbecile ! " screamed the lady ; " the flat belongs to *me*—Colette Aubray. And

your presence may ruin me—I expect a visitor on most important business! He has not my self-control; if he finds you here he will most certainly send you a challenge. He is the best swordsman in Paris! I advise you to believe me, for you have just five minutes to save your life!"

"Monsieur," wailed Léonie, "you have been deceived!" And, between her sobs, she confessed the circumstances, which he heard with the greatest difficulty, owing to the chattering of his teeth.

The rain was descending in cataracts when Monsieur Rigaud got outside; but though the trams and the trains had both stopped running, and cabs were as dear as radium, his fury was so tempestuous that nothing could deter him from reaching the poet's real abode. His attack on the front door warned Trictorin and Pitou what had happened, and they raised themselves, blanched, from their pillows, to receive his curses. It was impossible to reason with him, and he launched the most frightful denunciation at his nephew for an hour, when the abatement of the downpour permitted him to depart. More, at noon, who should arrive but Léonie in tears! She had been dismissed from her employment, and came to beg the poet to intercede for her.

"What calamities!" groaned Tricotrin. "How fruitless are man's noblest endeavours without the favouring breeze! I shall drown myself at eight o'clock. However, I will readily plead for you first, if your mistress will receive me."

By the maid's advice he presented himself late in the day, and when he had cooled his heels in the salon for some time, a lady entered, who was of such ravishing appearance that his head swam.

"Monsieur Tricotrin?" she inquired haughtily. "I have heard your name from your uncle, monsieur. Are you here to visit my servant?"

"Mademoiselle," he faltered, "I am here to throw myself on your mercy. At eight o'clock I have decided to commit suicide, for I am ruined. The only hope left me is to win your pardon before I die."

"I suppose your uncle has disowned you?" she said. "Naturally! It was a pretty situation to put him in. How would you care to be in it yourself?'

"Alas, mademoiselle," sighed Tricotrin, "there are situations to which a poor poet may not aspire!"

After regarding him silently, she exclaimed: "I cannot understand what a boy with eyes like yours saw in Léonie?"

"Merely good nature and a means to an end, believe me! If you would ease my last moments, reinstate her in your service. Do not let me drown with the knowledge that another is suffering for my fault! Mademoiselle, I entreat you—take her back!"

"And why should I ease your last moments?" she demurred.

"Because I have no right to ask it; because I have no defence for my sin towards you; because you would be justified in trampling on me—and to pardon would be sublime!"

"You are very eloquent for my maid,' returned the lady

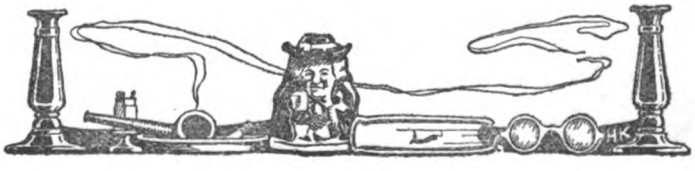
He shook his head. "Ah, no—I fear I am pleading for myself. For, if you reinstate the girl, it will prove that you forgive the man—and I want your forgiveness so much!" He fell at her feet.

"Does your engagement for eight o'clock press, monsieur?" murmured the lady, smiling. "If you could dine here again to-night, I might relent by degrees."

"And she is adorable!" he told Pitou. "I passed the most delicious evening of my life!"

"It is fortunate," observed Pitou, "for that, and your uncle's undying enmity, are all you have obtained by your imposture. Remember that the evening cost two thousand francs a year!"

"Ah, misanthrope," cried Tricotrin radiantly, "there must be a crumpled roseleaf in every Eden!"



The Variable Sex

THOSE who always speak well of women do not know them sufficiently; those who always speak ill of them do not know them at all. GUILLAUME PIGAULT LEBRUN.

A WOMAN should always stand by a woman. EURIPIDES.

WOMEN, as they are like riddles in being unintelligible, so generally resemble them in this, that they please us no longer when once we know them. POPE.

THE female woman is one of the greatest institooshuns of which this land can boast.
ARTEMUS WARD.

WOMEN may be whole oceans deeper than we are, but they are also a whole paradise better. She may have got us out of Eden, but as a compensation she makes the earth very pleasant.
JOHN OLIVER HOBBES.

THEIR tricks and craft hae put me daft,
They've ta'en me in, and a' that,
But clear your decks, and—Here's the sex!
I like the jades for a' that.
BURNS.

WOMAN has more art and man has more genius; woman observes and man reasons.
ROUSSEAU.

THE fickleness of the woman I love is only equalled by the infernal constancy of the women who love me. G. B. SHAW.

WOMEN always show more taste in adorning others than themselves; and the reason is, that their persons are like their hearts—they read another's better than they can their own. JEAN PAUL.

WOMAN'S love, like lichens on a rock, will still grow where even charity can find no soil to nurture itself. BOVEE.

WITH woman the heart argues, not the mind. MATTHEW ARNOLD.

LET our weakness be what it will, mankind will still be weaker; and whilst there is a world, 'tis woman that will govern it. VANBRUGH.

LOSE no time to contradict her,
Nor endeavour to convict her;
Only take this rule along,
Always to advise her wrong,
And reprove her when she's right;
She may then grow wise for spite.
SWIFT.

WOMAN'S heart is just like a lithographer's stone—what is once written upon it cannot be rubbed out. THACKERAY.

WOMEN wish to be loved, not because they are pretty, or good, or well-bred, or graceful, or intelligent, but because they are themselves. AMIEL.

The Last Class

"We who are about to die, salute the living"

By ALPHONSE DAUDET

(*Translated by George Burnham Ives*)

I WAS very late for school that morning and I was terribly afraid of being scolded, especially as Monsieur Hamel had told us that he would examine us on participles, and I did not know the first thing about them. For a moment I thought of staying away from school and wandering about the fields. It was such a warm, lovely day. I could hear the blackbirds whistling on the edge of the wood, and in the Rippert field, behind the sawmill, the Prussians going through their drill. All that was much more tempting to me than the rules concerning participles; but I had the strength to resist, and I ran as fast as I could to school.

As I passed the mayor's office, I saw that there were people gathered about the little board on which notices were posted. For two years all our bad news had come from that board—battles lost, conscriptions, orders from headquarters; and I thought without stopping:

"What can it be now?"

Then, as I ran across the square, Watcher the blacksmith, who stood there with his apprentice, reading the placard, called out to me:

"Don't hurry so, my boy; you'll get to your school soon enough!"

I thought that he was making fun of me, and I ran into Monsieur Hamel's little yard all out of breath.

Usually, at the beginning of school, there was a great uproar which could be heard in the street, desks opening and closing, lessons repeated aloud in unison, with our ears stuffed in order to learn quicker, and the teacher's stout ruler beating on the desk:

"A little more quiet!"

I counted on all this noise to reach my bench unnoticed; but as it happened, that day everything was quiet, like a Sunday morning. Through the open window I saw my comrades already in their places, and Monsieur Hamel walking back and forth with the terrible iron ruler under his arm. I had to open the door and enter, in the midst of that perfect silence. You can imagine whether I blushed and whether I was afraid!

But no! Monsieur Hamel looked at me with no sign of anger and said very gently:

"Go at once to your seat, my little Frantz; we were going to begin without you."

I stepped over the bench and sat down at once at my desk. Not until then, when I had partly recovered from my fright, did I notice that our teacher had on his handsome blue coat, his plaited ruff, and the black silk embroidered breeches, which he wore only on days of inspection or of distribution of prizes. Moreover, there was something extraordinary, something solemn about the whole class. But what surprised me most was to see at the back of the room, on the benches which were usually empty, some people from the village sitting, as silent as we were: old Hauser with his three-cornered hat, the ex-mayor, the ex-postman, and others besides. They all seemed depressed; and Hauser had brought an old spelling-book with gnawed edges, which he held wide-open on his knee, with his great spectacles askew.

While I was wondering at all this, Monsieur Hamel had mounted his platform, and in the same gentle and serious voice with which he had welcomed me, he said to us:

"My children, this is the last time that I shall teach you. Orders have come from Berlin to teach nothing but German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new teacher arrives to-morrow. This is the last class in French, so I beg you to be very attentive."

Those few words overwhelmed me. Ah! the villains! that was what they had posted at the mayor's office.

My last class in French!

And I barely knew how to write! So I should never learn! I must stop short where I was! How angry I was with myself because of the time I had wasted, the lessons I had missed, running about after nests, or sliding on the Saar! My books, which only a moment before I thought so tiresome, so heavy to carry—my grammar, my sacred history—seemed to me now like old friends, from whom I should be terribly grieved to part. And it was the same about Monsieur Hamel. The thought that he was going away, that I should never see him again, made me forget the punishments, the blows with the ruler.

Poor man! It was in honour of that last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes; and I understood now why those old fellows from the village were sitting at the end of the room. It seemed to mean that they regretted not having come oftener to the school. It was also a way of thanking our teacher for his forty years of faithful service, and of paying their respects to the fatherland which was vanishing.

¶

I WAS at that point in my reflections, when I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say from beginning to end that famous rule about participles, in a loud, distinct voice, without a slip! But I got mixed up at the first words, and I stood there swaying against my bench, with a full heart, afraid to raise my head. I heard Monsieur Hamel speaking to me:

"I will not scold you, my little Frantz; you must be punished enough; that is the way it goes; every day we say to ourselves: 'Pshaw! I have time enough. I will learn to-morrow.' And then you see what happens. Ah! it has been the great misfortune of our Alsace always to postpone its lessons until to-morrow. Now those people are entitled to say to us: 'What! you claim to be French, and you can neither speak nor write your language!' In all this, my poor Frantz, you are not the guiltiest one. We all have our fair share of reproaches to address to ourselves.

"Your parents have not been careful enough to see that you were educated. They preferred to send you to work in the fields or in the factories, in order to have a few more sous. And have I nothing to reproach myself for? Have I not often made you water my garden instead of studying? And when I wanted to go fishing for trout, have I ever hesitated to dismiss you?"

Then, passing from one thing to another, Monsieur Hamel began to talk to us about the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful language in the world, the most clear, the most substantial; that we must always retain it among ourselves, and never forget it, because when a people falls into servitude, "so long as it clings to its language, it is as if it held the key to its prison."* Then he took the grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how readily I understood. Everything that he said seemed so easy to me, so easy. I believed, too, that I had never listened so closely, and that he, for his part, had never been so patient with his explanations. One would have said that, before going away, the poor man desired to give us all his knowledge, to force it all into our heads at a single blow.

When the lesson was at an end, we passed to writing. For that day Monsieur Hamel had prepared some entirely new examples, on which was written in a fine, round hand: "France, Alsace, France, Alsace." They were like little flags, waving all about the class, hanging from the rods of our desks. You should have seen how hard we all worked and how silent it was! Nothing could be heard save the grinding of the pens over the paper. At one time some cockchafers flew in; but no one paid any attention to them, not even the little fellows, who were struggling with their straight lines, with a will and conscientious application, as if even the lines were French. On the roof of the schoolhouse, pigeons cooed in low tones, and I said to myself as I listened to them:

"I wonder if they are going to compel them to sing in German too!"

From time to time, when I raised my eyes from my paper, I saw Monsieur Hamel sitting motionless in his chair and staring at the objects about him as if he wished to carry away in his glance the whole of his little schoolhouse. Think of it! For forty years he had been there in the same place, with his yard in front of him and his class just as it was! But the benches and desks were polished and rubbed by use; the walnuts in the yard had grown, and the

* "S'il tient sa langue, il tient la clé qui de ses chaines le délivre."—Mistral.

hop-vine which he himself had planted now festooned the windows even to the roof. What a heartrending thing it must have been for that poor man to leave all those and to hear his sister walking back and forth in the room overhead, packing their trunks! For they were to go away the next day—to leave the province forever.

However, he had the courage to keep the class to the end. After the writing, we had the lesson in history; then the little ones sang all together the *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*. Yonder, at the back of the room, old Hauser had put on his spectacles, and, holding his spelling-book in both hands, he spelled out the letters with them. I could see that he too was applying himself. His voice shook with emotion, and it was so funny to hear him, that we all longed to laugh and to cry. Ah! I shall remember that last class.

Suddenly the church clock struck twelve, then the Angelus rang. At the same moment, the bugles of the Prussians returning from drill blared under our windows. Monsieur Hamel rose, pale as death, from his chair. Never had he seemed to me so tall.

"My friends," he said, "my friends, I—I——"

But something suffocated him. He could not finish the sentence.

Thereupon he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on it with all his might, he wrote in the largest letters he could:

"VIVE LA FRANCE!"

Then he stood there, with his head resting against the wall, and without speaking, he motioned to us with his hand:

"That is all; go."

A Plaything House

YOU perceive that I am got into a new camp, and have left my tub at Windsor. It is a little plaything-house that I got out of Mrs. Chenevix's shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enamelled meadows, with filigrees hedges:

A small Euphrates through the piece is roll'd,
And little finches wave their wings in gold.

Two delightful roads, that you would call dusty, supply me continually with coaches and chaises: barges as solemn as Barons of the Exchequer move under my window; Richmond Hill and Ham Walks bound my prospect; but, thank God! the Thames is between me and the Duchess of Queensberry. Dowagers as plenty as flounders inhabit all around, and Pope's ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poetical moonlight. I have about land enough to keep such a farm as Noah's, when he set up in the ark with a pair of each kind; but my cottage is rather cleaner than I believe his was after they had been cooped up together forty days. The Chenevixes had tricked it out for themselves: up two pair of stairs is what they called Mrs. Chenevix's library, furnished with three maps, one shelf, a bust of Sir Isaac Newton, and a lame telescope without any glasses. Lord John Sackville *predecessed* me here, and instituted certain games called *cricketalia*, which have been celebrated this very evening in honour of him in a neighbouring meadow.

HORACE WALPOLE.

Shipwreck and a Shrew

An old feminine trick and a big miscalculation

By WARWICK DEEPING

LIKE a piece of white pulp, and yet a live thing that still had the will to live, Bob Gretton floundered through the surf and dug his fingers and toes into the sand. Three time he was caught by the wash of a wave and sucked back like a cat sliding down a roof. The last crawl took him clear of the claws of the sea, and he lay on his face on the sand and was sick.

"My God!"

It had all happened with such catastrophic suddenness. A little more than an hour ago they had been sitting at dinner under the *Sappho's* awning: Gretton, Enderby, Hanson, Helen Glaber, Mildred, and Captain Dick. The day had been rather sultry and very still—too oppressive even for that irrepressible egoist Helen Glaber, who had talked of exploring this derelict little island with its mountain, its palm groves, and its scrub. Gretton could remember Dick's silence, his restlessness, his worried watching of the horizon. They had been ready to laugh at him when he had ordered the engineer to get up steam.

"Have another peg, Dick!"

Half-an-hour later the cyclone had caught them, and the *Sappho* had turned turtle. Gretton could still hear Mildred Arkell's cry when she had been swept away from him in that struggle at the top of the companionway. She had been tossed into that black hell of boiling water—and in that moment Gretton had realised that he loved her.

He squirmed on the sand in an anguish of physical exhaustion. The great waves had knocked the breath out of his body, bruised him, trodden him into the sand. He was one great wet ache—dazed, half-drowned—and yet at the back of the mere physical anguish was that other anguish—the face of the drowned girl and her floating hair.

Presently he got up on his hands and knees and looked about him like a wounded animal. A patch of tawny light still showed in the west, the glare of a furnace seen through smoke. A furious wind was blowing, and scud flew over him as he crawled up the beach. He was conscious of the vast, black movement of the sea behind him, and ahead a huge swaying cloud that seemed mysteriously anchored to the ground. As Gretton neared it, pushing his way in through the quaking bushes, he realised that this swaying cloud was a palm grove, a shrieking mass of frightened trees, their foliage blown all one way like hair.

The sound of the sea and the wind in the palms was so overwhelming that he lay down under the bushes with a feeling of helplessness. The uproar bewildered him. He curled up under the bushes and shivered like the last man left alive in a doomed world.

Presently the wind died away almost as suddenly as it had come. The palms ceased to shriek; they stood still, astonished, conscious of mockery. The stars came out—soft and ironical. There was still the labouring of the sea—a sense of savage distress down yonder—but the face of the night was the calm face of an uncaring god.

Gretton sat up. Something revived in him. The conscious man in him felt challenged.

And then he began to curse. The passionate and frightened child that is in all of us, sent Gretton running wild through the scrub and down to the pale sands. He was in a panic of loneliness. He limped along the sands, shouting and waving his arms like a man gone mad.

"Hanson—Dick—Mildred! Is anyone alive? Am I all alone on this damned island?"

He called them by name, throwing his puny voice against the surge of the sea, vaguely conscious of the absurdity of this raving.

"You're not dead—all of you! Can't you

hear me shouting? It's Gretton—Bob Gretton."

Presently calmness came to him as it had come to the island. He stood very still on the sands, watching the waves rolling in out of the darkness.

"I'm all alone here," said an inward voice; "they are dead—all of them. What's the use?"

He went back to the palm grove and sat down in the darkness at the foot of a tree. His brain seemed to grow clear like the sky. It was full of pictures—the memories of the last few days. He saw the *Sappho's* deck under the awning, the comfortable chairs, the flat sea, the blue sky. He saw Helen Glaber's hard, sunburnt face, with its beaked nose, its ruff of sandy hair, its flashing smile that came and went like the flash of a lighthouse. He saw the men: Hanson, big and easy; Enderby, droll and thin. He saw Mildred Arkell, shy, gentle, always a little afraid, watching the Glaber woman whose slave she was.

He seemed to hear Helen Glaber giving the girl her orders in that serene and insolent voice of hers. "Fetch me that book." "I want a cushion."

Something raged in Gretton. He shouted aloud. "Damn her—damn her! Only yesterday she made Mildred cry."

He was absurdly moved by the thought of it, and by the recollection of what had happened. He had been talking to Mildred by the "gig"—he realised now that he had been making love to her—and suddenly Helen Glaber had sailed in. He could see her hard blue eyes and the flash of her teeth in her sunburnt face.

"Mildred, I pay you to darn my stockings."

Yes, just that, just those silly, brutal words. His cabin was next to the Glaber woman's. He had sat on his bunk before dinner and listened to that metallic voice uttering venomous things that only a woman can say to another. Mildred had wept.

"But I can't help it! If he——"

"I do not choose that you should cheapen yourself with any fool who wants to be amused."

And again Gretton raged. For weeks he had been incensed by the vast egotism of the woman, her cruelty, her cleverness, her determination to be first. Someone had nicknamed her "Mrs. One-better." She could not endure competition. If you differed from her she was insulted. If you agreed with her she thought you a fool.

"Curse her," he thought; "I wish I had her alone on this island! She made that girl's life a hell."

And then he burst out laughing—ironical laughter that laughed at itself.

"But what am I shouting about? The sea has washed the tears out of that child's eyes."

Emotion exhausts itself and Gretton fell asleep, lying curled up in the little sandy hollow at the foot of the tree. Creeping things crawled over him, and he did not feel them. The stars grew pale and the sea gradually flattened itself towards a tropical calm.

The dawn was coming up when Gretton woke. He sat up, still and bewildered, staring at the ragged fringe of white "duck" where one trouser leg had been torn off below the knee. He looked at the tops of the palms still black against a green-blue sky, at the sun domed on the horizon, at the shadowy scrub and the amber sand. It was very beautiful, but its beauty seemed evil—for he was alone.

Almost before Gretton was aware of it the physical part of him had taken control, pushing his spiritual nausea aside. He was hungry, most savagely hungry. He scrambled up. His clothes had dried on him in the night, and he was naïvely surprised to find that he was still wearing his light canvas shoes. But food! Something with which to stuff that emptiness inside him! He knew that there was water on the island, And then he stood astonished—leaning against the palm tree under which he had slept and looking seawards in the broadening light.

Less than a quarter of a mile away a flat reef jutted out into the sea, and hanging upon the reef and doubled over it like a half-filled sack thrown across a wall lay the wreck of the *Sappho*, gleaming white in the dawn. She lay high and dry, her funnel and masts gone, her back broken, and a black chasm showing amidships. But it was the *Sappho*, a bit of yesterday, a thing of human meaning.

Gretton ran. He forgot his stiffness and his hunger as he cut through the scrub and along the sands.

"Somebody may be alive there! Somebody may be alive!"

His heart beat like a bell. Even the

tallow-greased face of Brough the "trimmer" would be more humanly welcome than any angel face looking down out of heaven; but as he ran the hope drizzled out of Gretton's eyes. The *Sappho* stood out in all her battered nakedness. The sea had capsized her, played with her awhile, and then thrown her broken, but deck uppermost, upon the reef. She hung there smashed, ridiculous, dead. No live thing could have survived in that squash of timber and steel.

But there might be other things left in the *Sappho*—clothing, food. The savage man elbowed the civilized man aside and made a rush for the wreck. Gretton picked his way along the reef, the vitals of the *Sappho* visible to his eyes, the sections of a model cut in half. He saw cabin doors, strips of deck, machinery, dark crevices, twisted plates, a sort of pigeon-hole effect. The reef was littered with wreckage. He saw a body wedged in a crevice, glanced at it, recognised Jennings the engineer, and went on with a sense of chilliness at the pit of his stomach.

An axe lay in a pool of water. It came to Gretton's hand as a rude tool leaps to the hand of a primitive man. He climbed in and up through the V-shaped chasm in the *Sappho's* hulk, and there were things here that made him set his teeth, glimpses of the live men that had been trapped, suffocated, crushed. The soul in him cried out: "Thank God she was drowned!"

¶

BUT he was alive and he was hungry. He scrambled and burrowed into the wreck, to be astonished by the tricks the storm had played. He found the little saloon almost intact, save for the smashed fittings and an ooze of sand and water everywhere. He had remembered seeing a door marked "Stores," and he found it down below, not five yards from the place where the yacht had broken in half. The door was jammed. He attacked it with his axe.

Gretton broke in, and through a porthole saw the yellow sun hanging over the sea. This storeroom made him gloat, even though it resembled a grocery shop into which some giant had scooped a hand. Tins everywhere; tinned fruit, fish, meat and vegetables, bottles, broken and unbroken, bags, sacks, cases, canisters! And all these tins and cases were intact! The wild man in him yelped exultantly.

Gretton operated with the axe, and squatting on a sack of wet flour, ate corned beef from the jagged and rudely opened tin. Two blows from the hammer end of the axe knocked in the top of a canister of biscuits. He was in the act of leaning over to help himself when he heard the voice.

"Who's there?"

Gretton stiffened, doubting his own ears.

"Hallo! Who's there?"

The voice was real enough, a woman's voice, flat and metallic, and disastrously familiar. Gretton stood up, the tin of corned-beef in one hand, a biscuit in the other. There had been a momentary flicker of joy in his eyes at the sound of a human voice, but it was replaced by an expression of ironical and amazed disgust.

"Helen Glaber!"

Then others might be alive! There was compensation in the thought, but when he heard her climbing through the wreckage he felt shot through by a thrill of anger. This woman of all women! This piece of sun-baked brick and leather!

He turned out of the store-room and, walking along the alleyway, saw her face rising above the edge of the broken deck. He stood still, the creature of nameless repulsions, instincts.

"It's you, Gretton."

He nodded and bit off a piece of biscuit. She was lifting herself up by a twisted stanchion, dressed in nothing but a petticoat and a torn white blouse. Her short, sandy hair hung about her neck, and her blue eyes were fierce with hunger. She looked at his tin of meat and his biscuit.

"Thanks, I'll have some of that."

She had taken the tin out of his hand even before he had realised her hunger, and he stared and said nothing, though the savage in him had uttered a whimper of resentment. She leant against the plating, eating his meat and using her fingers. Gretton's face had grown watchful, almost sinister.

"Have you seen any of the others?"

It cost him an effort to speak to her.

She went on eating.

"Hanson is lying dead on the sand over there. After all, it was his fault."

Something generous glowed in Gretton. It was like her to condemn the dead.

"What do you mean—his fault?"

" He upset Captain Dick's judgment by quizzing him. We ought to have been under full steam and head on. Where did you find those biscuits ? Get me one."

The silent part of him was in instant rebellion, and aloud he said : " You'll find them in the store-room, down there."

She gave him a look that he had so often seen her give Mildred Arkell, a sort of crushing stare, but Gretton turned his back on her and scrambled to the sunlight on the reef. He wanted to be alone—he, a lone animal who had been ready to howl for a human mate !

" Great saints ! " he found himself thinking, " I believe if she were dropped down a volcano she'd be blown up again the same bit of heartless hell-cat brass ! "

She was just the same. That was the amazing and ominous fact. Her hard " I lead the field " egotism had always astonished him, until he had learnt to hate her for it when he had seen her cruelty to Mildred Arkell. She did things well. She was a fine horsewoman and a crack shot, a woman whose complacency it seemed impossible to hurt. If she corrected you, which she often did, you would generally find that she was right. As Enderby had put it : " If you hit her on the head with a hammer the thing would bounce off her and leave no mark."

But the irony of this coincidence ; that he should be marooned on this derelict island with this very woman as his mate ! Even in those first few moments he had felt himself up against her immense and unchastened egotism. But to live with it ? In five minutes she would be running the island—and him.

He heard her voice crying from the wreck.

" Bob Gretton, I want some of these stores carrying ashore."

She flashed into his vision munching a biscuit, her white teeth gleaming in her fierce brown face.

Her eyes looked angry. There are eyes that are always like that.

" I'll tell you the first thing you have got to do. Get a spar up and a flag. I'll show you the place——"

And then something very strange happened suddenly to this civilized man. He seemed to go back ten thousand years. All the smooth and conventional compromises fell from him. He became man, the dominant male.

Climbing back into the wreck with a swift and swinging aggressiveness, he swarmed up to the broken deck where the woman stood watching him—the woman who had not changed. Now Gretton was a big man, with a big face and jaw ; he had a leonine largeness of head and eyes. And he looked wild—wilder than he knew—with his unshaven chin, his torn clothes, and his bare chest showing hair.

He said nothing, but began to haul in the slack of a length of rope that dangled over the crust-edge of the upper deck. Then he went into the storeroom and carried out a case of biscuits. Roping it, he lowered it, and with a swing of the arms and body swung it through the gap in the yacht's side and on to the reef.

" Wait a bit. I'll tell you——"

He turned on her with a ferocity that was like the stroke of a lion's paw.

" Shut up ! I don't want any talking. Get down there."

She flashed one of her brilliant and mechanical smiles at him.

" That's quite a good gaff ! "

Next moment he had taken her by the shoulders and pushed her over the edge of the broken deck, holding her by one arm till she had got a grip of something, and seeing her descend like a clawing and astonished cat. He followed her. They finished up among the *Sappho's* bilge-plates, looking at each other across the bent propeller shaft.

" What's the joke ? "

She was a little out of breath, hugely angry, and inclined to think him mad.

" Come on."

He reached and caught her by the hair.

" Come on. This is my show."

For an instant her eyes flared ; they were the eyes of a devil. And then she came climbing over the propeller shaft with that antarctic smile on her face.

" Oh, I see the joke. All right."

She thought him mad. The catastrophe had knocked his reason edgeways, but he stood six-foot-one and had the chest of a gladiator !

Gretton led her to the reef, holding her by the hair.

" See that clump of palms ? "

He pointed and she nodded, her thin mouth furious.

" Unlash that case and shoulder it over to the palm grove. Then come back for something else. That's your job. See ? "

He let her go, and she looked at him as though she had a knife hidden behind her back and was wondering where to strike him. Then she unknotted the rope, got the case on her right shoulder, and started.

Gretton watched her. His nostrils were quivering, and he was breathing hard. For a moment his old tame civilized self tried to obtrude itself, but was kicked back into its kennel. He was looking at the female figure in front of him. She was not female; he felt that as he looked at her. Her torn blouse showed two humpy shoulder-blades with a deep hollow between them, and in the hollow there was a big brown mole. He looked at the two bare legs below the short petticoat. They were irritating legs rather like badly-shaped stocking stuffed with bran, complacent, sleek, sexless. Her feet were too long. There was a flatness about her whole figure, a flatness that displeased him. He turned back to the wreck.

"She thinks me mad!"

He stood and laughed, opening his shoulders and throwing back his head.

"She can go on thinking it—till I have taught her her lesson."

He set to work on the wreck, collecting all the undamaged stores from the storeroom and slinging them over the side. The *Sappho's* water tanks had caved in, but he found a small tank in the steward's pantry that still held water, enough to last for a couple of days.

"I wonder if she'll come back?"

He walked to the end of the broken deck, and found her waiting down below. She was polite—venomously formal.

"What next, Mr. Gretton?"

"All these stores must be carried across."

She smiled.

"Don't you think, Mr. Gretton——"

"I am thinking," he said roughly, and she turned about, but he called her back.

"You will have a meal ready at noon. Here's what you want. A tin-opener, knives and forks, four plates. I'll pass them down to you."

She went like a lamb, but he suspected the wolf in the lambskin, and all through the morning between his pitching of ropes, spars, tools, and sail-cloth on to the reef, he kept an eye on her activities. She was as strong as most men, and she stuck to her work, going sullenly to and fro between the wreck and the palm grove, but Gretton had no pity.

"If Mildred were alive," he thought, "you would be making her toil like a galley slave."

They worked together all the afternoon, carrying up stores and gear, and Gretton spent two hours putting up a couple of canvas shelters under the palms. The sun blazed, but they carried on. About five o'clock they knocked off for tea, a tea that consisted of water, biscuits and jam. The man-emperor did not unbend; the silence between them was so stiff with mutual antipathy that it showed no signs of becoming ridiculous.

¶

"MR. GRETTON, I want to go to the wreck."

He was sitting with his back against a tree, examining a box of sodden cigars, and wondering how long they would take to dry in the sun.

"All right."

"Clothes, you know," she flashed a smile at him. "Dick had a petrol-lighter. I might find it—or matches."

He nodded.

"There's Hansen—lying on the sands."

"I haven't forgotten him," he said curtly; "you'll bring back some matches and dry them. You can have an hour."

She looked at him queerly and went her way, and Gretton spent the time rigging up a spar and a flag in a conspicuous position on the beach. He meant to bury Hanson and the engineer at sundown, and he was suddenly confronted with the thought that Mildred Arkell's body might be washed ashore. He straightened himself and looked at the sea. "Keep her," he said aloud, "it is better so"; and turning found Helen Glaber behind him.

Her eyes said "Yes, you are mad. Mad people talk to themselves."

But there was more in her eyes than that. She had a sly, smooth look, like a cat that has stolen something and feels sleek with successful cleverness. Gretton noticed the change in her. This reversion to a more primitive attitude of the sexes seemed to have quickened his instincts.

They walked back to the palm grove, Gretton keeping slightly behind her and observing her with vague eyes. If she had found a weapon she had hidden it on her person or near the camp.

When they reached the camp he took

the matches from her and pretended to amuse himself in opening the boxes and laying the sticks to dry on the top of the biscuit-box. Helen Glaber had rescued some blankets from the yacht. She had carried them in a tangled rope, and was bending over them and spreading them on the ground. Gretton was behind her, right hand poised and holding a match. As she bent down he saw something swing under her petticoat and bulge it out ever so slightly—and Gretton smiled.

He got up, yawned, stretched himself, edging nearer to her with casual indirectness as though vaguely interested in her blankets. She had disentangled them, meaning to spread them on the bushes.

And suddenly he made a leap and caught her wrists. They stood close, looking into each other's eyes. The woman was afraid.

"Put your hands up—over your head! Keep them there."

She obeyed him, furious, yet cowed. He knelt down, groped for a moment, gave a fierce twitch of the arm, and stood up holding a revolver that she had slung from her waist with a piece of tape.

"I thought so."

She said nothing. Her impression of his madness began to fade away. Her angry eyes masked a sudden respect for him.

"Any more of these toys?"

She shook her head.

"Thank you. But no more tricks. You understand?"

He towered above her, and for the moment he thought she was going to try the feminine trick of tears. She blinked, looked up at him with a sort of absurd bewilderment, and then nodded her head. The man in him felt that he had her beaten.

Gretton walked down to the sea and tossed the revolver well out into the water. Then he strolled along to the *Sappho*, and searched every available nook and corner for any more toys of the same order. Hanson had owned a couple of sporting rifles, and Gretton found them in a case under Hanson's bunk. He carried them away with him, and buried them in the sand close to the graves he dug for Hanson and the engineer. He marked the two graves with the blade of the broken oar, and stood awhile in solemn silence before returning to the palms.

Here a new spirit surprised him. The woman had supper ready, and on the box that was to serve as a table he saw his own whisky flask, a petrol-lighter, pipe and a tin of tobacco. He glanced at them but he said nothing. Helen Glaber was busy in one of the canvas shelters; she had collected dry grass and was making a bed.

His bed! He guessed that at once, and yet the man in him was not touched. She had reverted suddenly to the primæval, feminine methods. The beast was to be managed if he could not be ruled.

He accepted her labours and her ingenuities with casual matter-of-factness. They supped: they sat awhile in silence, and then crawled each into their respective shelters. Gretton smoked for an hour, but he did not lie down until he knew by the sound of her breathing that the woman was asleep.

Gretton was up early while Helen Glaber was still asleep.

With a big can slung over his shoulder he started westwards along the beach, intending to find the place where the island minute stream of fresh water made its way into the sea. Passing the wreck of the *Sappho* and the two graves, he paused to light his pipe. His mood was one of grimness and depression, a mood of reaction after the strenuous happenings of the first day upon the island.

And then fate blew his pessimism into the limbo of forgotten ills. He had walked another half-mile along the beach, and had stopped to relight his pipe, when he felt his heart beating fast and hard, for he had heard a voice—or rather the ghost of a voice—that cried out feebly: "Water, water!"

He was trembling like a dog, and next moment he was running along the sands, shouting as he ran:

"Where are you? Where are you?"

He came quite suddenly upon her, lying in a sandy hollow, and for a moment he stood on the low ridge above her resting-place, hardly able to believe that she was real. The coincidence seemed too impossible. Both women alive, and all the men, save himself, dead!

Almost instantly he was down on the sands beside her, bending over her with immense tenderness. The miracle had changed him and the whole island. She was looking at him vaguely, and then, stretching out an unsteady hand, touched his face as though she doubted its solidity. He saw that her right leg was broken, for

it lay all twisted. She had crawled a little way up the beach and had lain there for thirty-six hours with nothing to drink all through the blaze of a southern day.

"Thank God I have found you," he said.

Her lips and mouth were so dry that she could hardly speak.

"Bob, is it you, really?"

"Thank God," he said again, "thank God I came this way."

She was so feeble and so spent that he began to be in terror for her life, and his heart beat to action.

He bent over her, whispering like a mother to a child.

"Don't be frightened any more. I am going to fetch you water. I have a camp over there and a tent and food. I'll be back in twenty minutes."

She touched his face again with her fingers and smiled very faintly.

"Dear Bob!"

He kissed her forehead, and ran back to the palm grove. Helen Glaber was just emerging from her shelter; she flashed a limelight smile, but he had no words for Helen Glaber. He was a whirlwind, and she sat on her heels and watched him with suspicious eyes. His actions revived her opinion of his madness. He half-filled the water-can, stuffed the whisky flask and the tumbler into the pockets of his drill jacket, and added some biscuits and a jack-knife. Two pieces of wood from the lid of a box, a length of frayed rope, and a blanket completed his equipment. He started off again at full speed, and without a word to the woman.

"The man's off his head," she said to herself; "a nice life this with a mad dog on an island!"

She picked up the lid of a biscuit tin and looked at the reflection of her own face. It seemed to please her. She sat and smiled.

After a morning dip and an alfresco toilet, made while the madman was playing Crusoe somewhere on the beach, she set herself to prepare breakfast, and even rose to the refinement of lighting a fire and boiling a kettle. She was opening a tin of tongue and making rather a mess of it when she heard Gretton pushing through the scrub. She had decided to try a coy and persuasive attitude, and she did not look round at him.

"Those blankets on the bushes. Get them."

She glanced up, and her face seemed to lengthen till it was as long as the face of a Roman-nosed horse. She blinked, screwed up her hard mouth, and was on her feet instantly.

"What, Mildred?"

Gretton carried the girl past her.

"Wait. Is her leg broken? If so you ought not——"

Gretton swung a look at her over his shoulder.

"Did you hear me? Get—those—blankets."

¶

FOR at the sight of the girl whom she had bullied for two years Helen Glaber's matchless egotism had reasserted itself. The whole situation had changed. The man-thing was in the minority. Moreover, she had revised her opinion of his madness.

But Gretton's words were like a blow in the face, a male fist that threatened. She hesitated, and then went for the blankets.

Gretton had carried Mildred Arkell into his canvas shelter, and kneeling down laid her gently on the ground. He had splinted the broken leg and lashed her feet together so as to steady the broken limb while he carried her to the palm grove.

"How's that? Have I hurt you?"

She smiled at him. "No."

He turned to find Helen Glaber pushing into the shelter with the blankets in her arms, but Gretton took the blankets from her and extruded her with a broad and uncompromising back.

"Go and pull some more grass for a pillow."

It was then that Helen Glaber showed fight. Mildred Arkell belonged to her. Had she not taken the girl out of a country parsonage, paid her thirty pounds a year, and used her as the scapegoat for all her moods and tempers?

"Will you get out of my way, please? This is my affair. Mildred belongs to me."

It was her bid for power in that little world of three, but she was to be met and defeated by a force that she had always ignored, the thing that we call "love," the power that is behind all the strivings and the sufferings of a civilization that began in a jungle life thousands of centuries ago. The girl on the ground cried out with a sudden and passionate vehemence:

"I won't be outched by her! Bob, send her away."

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Gretton rose from his knees and turned on Helen Glaber.

"You are not wanted in here. I think that's obvious."

With a firm hand on her shoulder he pushed her out of Mildred Arkell's sail-cloth tent.

So love outvoted hate, and when, some six months later, the tramp steamship *Alabama* put in to water at the island where the *Sappho's* wreck and the flag flying on the beach spoke of a tragedy, the captain's glass discovered people who lived. A boat had put off from the *Alabama*, and a man and a girl were standing on the edge of the palm grove watching the boat's crew pulling towards the island. A hundred yards away a third figure—the figure of a woman—showed against the dark trunks of the palms. There appeared to be two separate camps on the island, one with two shelters placed side by side, the other with a solitary tent standing alone.

"Gee, that's queer!" said the man with the telescope; "seems as though one of them has seceded. Two republics on one island!"

The three figures moved down to the beach, but the girl and the man held aloof from the woman.

"This beats the band!" said the *Alabama's* captain; "they don't even recognize each other! It's a clean cut! Not on speaking terms! Wa'al, I always did say that to find out what the inside of life was like you'd got to be wrecked on a desert island with two women and no dog!"

But in the course of a few days he had learnt to appreciate the human irony of the affair, and had taken off his shoes in the "Court of the lovers."

"I guess that hell-cat has had her tail twisted!"

And when the girl and the man were married, he put on white cotton gloves and went ashore to help in the blessing.

"SO STRANGE IT SEEMS . . . ."

SO strange it seems . . .
One hour to hold Life's story for your own,
To know the joy of triumph and the pain of tears.
With Yesterday—once loved—a long-lost dream,
To greet with vivid hope the dawning years.
To watch the fleeting days of childhood pass,
And see the sunset flaming in the sky,
To know hot anger and swift tenderness,
One hour to love and laugh—and then to die.

* * * * *

And still the summer-scented days will dawn,
And forests know the kiss of sun and rain.
And still the tireless stars will crowd the skies,
When other men tell tales of joy and pain.
. . . So strange it seems.

M. D. TURNER.

The Error of The Day

Concerning an official slip and its dramatic adjustment

By GILBERT PARKER

The "Error of the Day" may be defined as "The difference between the distance or range which must be put upon the sights in order to hit the target and the actual distance from the gun to the target."—ADMIRALTY NOTE.

A great naval gun never fires twice alike. It varies from day to day, and expert allowance has to be made in sighting every time it is fired. Variations in atmosphere, conditions of ammunition, and the wear of the gun are the contributory causes to the ever-varying "Error of the Day."

"SAY, ain't he pretty?"

"A Jim-Dandy—oh, my!"

"What's his price in the open market?"

"Thirty millions—I think not."

Then was heard the voice of Billy Goat—his name was William Goatry:

"Out in the cold world, out in the street;
Nothing to wear, and nothing to eat,
Fatherless, motherless, sadly I roam,
Child of misfortune, I'm driven from home."

A loud laugh followed, for Billy Goat was a popular person at Kowatin in the Saskatchewan country. He had an inimitable drollery, heightened by a cast in his eye, a very large mouth, and a round, good-humoured face; also he had a hand and arm like iron and was altogether a great man on a "spree."

There had been a two days' spree at Kowatin, for no other reason than that there had been great excitement over the capture and the subsequent escape of a prairie-rover, who had robbed the contractor's money-chest at the railhead on the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Forty miles from Kowatin he had been caught by, and escaped from, the tall, brown-eyed man with the hard-bitten face who leaned against the open window of the tavern, looking indifferently at the jeering crowd before him. For a police officer, he was not unpopular with them; but he had been a failure for once and, as Billy Goat had said: "It tickled us to death to see a rider of the plains off his trolley—on the cold, cold ground, same as you and me."

They did not undervalue him. If he had been less a man than he was, they would not have taken the trouble to cover him with their drunken ribaldry. He had scored off them in the past in just such sprees as this, when he had the power to do so, and used the power good-naturedly and quietly—but used it.

Then, he was Sergeant Foyle of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, on duty in a district as large as the United Kingdom. And he had no greater admirer than Billy Goat, who now reviled him. Not without cause, in a way, for he had reviled himself to this extent, that when the prairie-rover, Halbeck, escaped on the way to Prince Albert, after six months' hunt for him and a final capture in the Kowatin district, Foyle resigned the Force before the Commissioner could reproach him or call him to account. Usually so exact, so certain of his target, some care had not been taken, he had miscalculated, and there had been the Error of the Day. Whatever it was, it had seemed to him fatal; and he had turned his face from the barrack yard.

Then he had made his way to the Happy Land Hotel at Kowatin, to begin life as "a free and independent gent on the loose," as Billy Goat had said. To resign had seemed extreme; because, though the Commissioner was vexed at Halbeck's escape, Foyle was the best non-commissioned officer in the Force. He had frightened horse-thieves and bogus land-agents and speculators out of the country; had fearlessly tracked down a criminal or a band of criminals when the odds were heavy against him. He carried on his cheek the scars of two bullets, and there was one white lock in his brown hair where an arrow had torn the scalp away as, alone, he drove into the Post a score of Indians,

fresh from raiding the cattle of an immigrant trailing north.

Now he was out of work, or so it seemed; he had stepped down from his scarlet-coated dignity, from the place of guardian and guide of civilisation, into the idleness of a tavern stoop.

As the little group swayed round him, and Billy Goat started another song, Foyle roused himself as though to move away—he was waiting for the mail-stage to take him south:

"' Oh, father, dear father, come home with me now,
The clock in the steeple strikes one;
You said you were coming right home from the shop
As soon as your day's work was done.
Come home—come home——"

The song arrested him, and he leaned back against the window again. A curious look came into his eyes, a look that had nothing to do with the acts of the people before him. It was searching into a scene beyond this bright sunlight and the far green-brown grass, and the little oasis of trees in the distance marking a homestead, and the dust of the wagon wheels out on the trail beyond the grain elevator—beyond the blue horizon's rim, quivering in the heat, and into regions where this crisp, clear, life-giving, life-saving air never blew.

" You said you were coming right home from the shop
As soon as your day's work was done.
Come home—come home——"

He remembered when he had first heard this song in a play called " Ten Nights in a Bar-room," many years before, and how it had wrenched his heart and soul, and covered him with a sudden shame and anger. For his father had been a drunkard, and his brother had grown up a drunkard, that brother whom he had not seen for ten years until—until . . .

He shuddered, closed his eyes, as though to shut out something that the mind saw. He had had a rough life, he had become inured to the seamy side of things—there was a seamy side even in this clean, free, wide land; and he had no sentimentality, though something seemed to hurt and shame him now.

"As soon as your day's work was done.
Come home—come home——"

The crowd was uproarious. The exhilaration had become a kind of delirium. Men were losing their heads; there was an element of irresponsibility in the new outbreak likely to breed some violent act, which every man of them would lament when sober again.

Nettlewood Foyle watched the dust rising from the wheels of the stage, which had passed the elevator and was nearing the Prairie Home Hotel far down the street. He would soon leave behind him this noisy ribaldry of which he was the centre. He tossed his cheroot away. Suddenly he heard a low voice behind him.

" Why don't you hit out, sergeant? "

He started almost violently and turned round. Then his face flushed, his eyes blurred with feeling and deep surprise, and his lips parted in a whispered greeting.

A girl's face from the shade of the sitting-room was looking out at him, half-smiling, but with heightened colour and a suppressed agitation. The girl was not more than twenty-five, graceful, supple and strong. Her chin was dimpled; across her right temple was a slight scar. She had eyes of a wonderful deep blue; they seemed to swim with light. As Foyle gazed at her for a moment dumbfounded, with a quizzical suggestion and smiling still a little more, she said:

" You used to be a little quicker, Nett." The voice appeared to attempt unconcern, but it quivered. It was so long since she had seen him.

He was about to reply, but, at the instant, a reveller pushed him with a foot behind the knees so that they were sprung forward. The crowd laughed—all save Billy Goat, who knew this man.

Like lightning, and with cold fury in his eyes, Foyle caught the tall cattleman by the forearm and, with a swift, dexterous twist, had the fellow in his power.

" Down—down, to your knees, you skunk! " he said in a low, fierce voice.

The knees of the big man bent—Foyle had not taken lessons of Ogami, the Jap, for nothing—they bent, and the cattleman squealed, so intense was the pain. It was break or bend; and he bent—to the ground and lay there. Foyle stood over him for a moment, a hard light in his eyes, and then he looked at the other roisterers and said:

" There's a limit, and he reached it. Your mouths are your own and you can blow off to suit your fancy; but if anyone thinks I'm a tame coyote to be poked with a stick—! " He broke off, stooped over, and helped the man before him to his feet. The arm had been strained.

"Hell, but you're a twister!" the cattleman said with a grimace of pain.

Billy Goat was a gentleman, after his kind, and he liked Sergeant Foyle with a great liking. He turned to the crowd and spoke.

"Say, boys, this mine's worked out. Let's leave the Happy Land to Foyle. Boys, what is he—what—is—he? What—is—Sergeant Foyle—boys?"

The roar of the song they all knew in reply, as Billy Goat waved his arms about like the wild leader of a wild orchestra:

"Sergeant Foyle, oh, he's a knocker from the West,
He's a chase-me-Charley, come-and-kiss-me tiger from the Zoo;
He's a dandy on the pinch, and he's got a double cinch
On the gent that's going careless, and he'll soon cinch you:
And he'll soon—and he'll soon—cinch you!"

Foyle watched them go, dancing, stumbling, calling back at him, as they moved toward the Prairie Home Hotel:

"And he'll soon—he'll soon cinch you!"

His underlip came out, his eyes half-closed, as he watched them. "I've done my last cinch. I've done my last cinch," he murmured.

¶

THEN, suddenly, the look in his face changed, the eyes swam as they had done a minute before at the sight of the girl in the room behind. Whatever his trouble was, that face had obscured it in a flash, and the pools of feeling far down in the depths of a lonely nature had been stirred. Recognition, memory, tenderness, desire swam in his face, made generous and kind the hard lines of the strong mouth. In an instant he had swung himself over the window-sill. The girl had drawn away now into a more shaded corner of the room and she regarded him with a mingled anxiety and eagerness. Was she afraid of something? Did she fear that—she knew not quite what, but it had to do with a long ago.

"It was time you hit out, Nett," she said, half-shyly. "You're more patient than you used to be, but you're surer. My, that was a twist you gave him, Nett! Aren't you glad to see me?" she added with an effort to hide her agitation.

He reached out and took her hand with a strange shyness and a self-consciousness which was alien to his nature. The touch of her hand thrilled him. Their eyes met. She dropped hers. Then he gathered himself together. "Glad to see you? Of course, of course I'm glad. You stunned me, Jo. Why, do you know where you are? You're a thousand miles from home. I can't get it through my head, not really. What brings you here? It's ten years—ten years since I saw you, and you were only fifteen, but a fifteen that was as good as twenty."

He scanned her face closely. "What's that scar on your forehead, Jo? You hadn't that—then."

"I ran up against something," she said evasively, her eyes glittering, "and it left that scar. Does it look so bad?"

"No, you'd never notice it if you weren't looking close as I am. You see, I knew your face so well ten years ago."

He shook his head with a forced kind of smile. It became him, however, for he smiled rarely; and the smile was like a lantern turned on his face—it gave light and warmth to its quiet strength—or hardness.

"You were always quizzing," she said, with an attempt at a laugh—"always trying to find out things. That's why you made them reckon with you out here. You always could see behind things, always would have your own way, always were meant to be a success."

She was beginning to get control of herself again. "You were meant to succeed—you had to," she added.

"I've been a dead failure—a dead failure," he answered slowly. "So they say. So they said. You heard them, Jo?"

He jerked his head toward the open window.

"Oh, those drunken fools!" she exclaimed indignantly and her face hardened. "How I hate drink! It spoils everything."

There was silence for a moment. They were both thinking of the same thing—of the same man. He repeated a question.

"What brings you out here, Jo.?"

"Dorland," she answered, her face setting into determination and anxiety.

His face became pinched. "Dorl!" he said heavily. "What for, Jo? What do you want with Dorl?"

"When Cynthy died she left her five hundred dollars a year to the baby, and——"

"Yes, yes, I know. Well, Jo?"

"Well, it was all right for five years—Dorland paid it in; but for five years he hasn't paid anything. He's taken it, stolen it from his own child by his own honest wife. I've come to get it—anyway, to stop

him from doing it any more. His own child—it puts murder in my heart, Nett!

He nodded grimly. "That's likely. And you've kept Dorl's child with your own money all these years?"

"I've got four hundred dollars a year, Nett, you know; and I've been dressmaking—they say I've got taste," she added, with a whimsical smile.

Nett nodded his head. "Five years. That's twenty-five hundred dollars he's stolen from his own child. It's eight years old now, isn't it?"

"Bobby is eight and a half."

"And his schooling, and his clothing, and everything; and you have to pay for it all?"

"Oh, I don't mind, Nett; it isn't that. Bobby is Cynthy's child, and I love him—but I want him to have his rights. Dorl must give up his hold on that money—or——"

He nodded gravely. "Or you'll set the law on him?"

"It's one thing or the other. Better to do it now when Bobby is young and can't understand."

"Or read the newspapers," he commented thoughtfully.

"I don't think I've a hard heart," she continued, "but I'd like to punish him, if it wasn't for Bobby. Dorland was dreadfully cruel, even to Cynthy."

"How did you know he was up here?"

"From the lawyer that pays over the money. Dorland has had it sent out here to Kowatin this two years. And he sent word to the lawyer a month ago that he wanted it to get here as usual. The letter left the same day as I did, and it got here yesterday with me, I suppose. He'll be after it—perhaps to-day. He wouldn't let it wait long, Dorl wouldn't."

Foyle started. "To-day—to-day——"

There was a gleam in his eyes, a setting of the lips, a line sinking into the forehead between the eyes.

"I've been watching for him all day, and I'll watch till he comes. I'm going to say some things to him that he won't forget. I'm going to get Bobby's money or have the law to do it—unless you think I'm a brute, Nett." She looked at him wistfully.

"That's all right. Don't worry about me, Jo. He's my brother, but I know him—I know him through and through. He's done everything that a man can do and not be hanged. A thief, a drunkard, and a brute—and he killed a man out here," he added hoarsely. "I found it out myself—myself. It was murder."

Suddenly, as he looked at her, an idea seemed to flash into his mind. He came very near and looked at her closely. Then he reached over and almost touched the scar on her forehead.

"Did he do that, Jo?"

For an instant she was silent and looked down at the floor. Presently she raised her eyes. Once or twice she tried to speak, but failed. At last she gained courage and said:

"After Cynthy's death I kept house for him for a year, taking care of little Bobby. I loved Bobby so—he has Cynthy's eyes. One day, Dorland . . . oh, Nett, of course I oughtn't to have stayed there, I know it now! But I was only sixteen, and what did I understand? And my mother was dead. One day—oh, please, Nett, you can guess! He said something to me. I made him leave the house. Before I could make plans what to do, he came back mad with drink. I went for Bobby, to get out of the house, but he caught me. I struck him in the face, and he threw me against the edge of the open door. It made the scar."

Foyle's face was white. "Why did you never write and tell me that, Jo? You know that I——" He stopped suddenly.

"You had gone out of our lives. I didn't know where you were for a long time; and then—then it was all right about Bobby and me, except that Bobby didn't get the money that was his. But now——"

Foyle's voice was hoarse and low. "He made that scar and he—and you only sixteen. . . . Oh, my God!"

Suddenly his face reddened and he choked with shame and anger. "And he's my brother!" was all that he could say.

"Do you see him up here ever?" she asked pityingly.

"I never saw him till a week ago." A moment, then he added: "The letter wasn't to be sent here in his own name, was it?"

She nodded. "Yes, in his own name, Dorland W. Foyle. Didn't he go by that name when you saw him?"

There was an oppressive silence, in which she saw that something moved him strangely, and then he answered: "No, he was going by the name of Halbeck—Hiram Halbeck."

The girl gasped. Then the whole thing

burst upon her. "Hiram Halbeck! Hiram Halbeck, the thief—I read it all in the papers—the thief that you caught and that got away. And you've left the Mounted Police because of it—oh, Nett!" Her eyes were full of tears.

He nodded. "I didn't know who he was till I arrested him," he said. "Then, afterwards, I thought of his child, and let him get away; and for my poor old mother's sake. She never knew how bad he was even as a boy. But I remember how he used to steal and drink the brandy from her bedside when she had the fever. She never knew the worst of him. But I let him away in the night, Jo, and I resigned, and they thought that Halbeck had beaten me, had escaped. Of course, I couldn't stay in the Force, having done that. But, by the heaven above us, if I had him here now, I'd do the thing—so help me God!"

"Why should you ruin your life for him?" she said, with an outburst of indignation. All that was in her heart welled up in her eyes at the thought of what Foyle was. "You must not do it. You shall not do it. *He* must pay for his wickedness, not you. It would be a sin. You and what becomes of you means so much." Suddenly with a flash of purpose she added: "He will come for that letter, Nett. He would run any kind of risk to get a dollar. He will come here for that letter—perhaps to-day."

He shook his head moodily, oppressed by the trouble that was on him. "He's not likely to venture here, after what's happened."

"You don't know him as well as I do, Nett. He is so vain he'd do it, just to show that he could. He'd probably come in the evening. Does anyone know him here? So many people pass through Kowatin every day. Has anyone seen him?"

"Only Billy Goatry," he answered, working his way to a solution of the dark problem. "Only Billy Goatry knows him. The fellow that led the singing—that was Goatry."

"There he is now," he added, as Billy Goat passed the window.

She came and laid a hand on his arm. "We've got to settle things with him," she said. "If Dorl comes, Nett——"

There was silence for a moment, then he caught her hand in his and held it. "If he comes, leave him to me, Jo. You will leave him to me?" he added anxiously.

"Yes," she answered. "You'll do what's right—by Bobby?"

"And by Dorl, too," he replied strangely.

There were loud footsteps without.

"It's Goatry," said Foyle. "You stay here. I'll tell him everything. He's all right; he's a true friend. He'll not interfere."

The handle of the door turned slowly. "You keep watch on the post office, Jo."

Goatry came round the opening door with a grin.

"Hope I don't intrude," he said, stealing a half-leering look at the girl. As soon as he saw her face, however, he straightened himself up and took on different manners. He had not been so intoxicated as he had made out, and he seemed only "mellow" as he stood before them, with his corrugated face and queer, quaint look, the eye with the cast in it blinking faster than the other.

"It's all right, Goatry," said Foyle. "This lady is one of my family from the east."

"Goin' on by stage?" Goatry said vaguely, as they shook hands.

She did not reply, for she was looking down at the street, and presently she started as she gazed. She laid a hand suddenly on Foyle's arm.

"See—he's come!" she said in a whisper and as though not realising Goatry's presence. "He's come!"

Goatry looked as well as Foyle. "Halbeck—the devil!" he said.

Foyle turned to him. "Stand by, Goatry. I want you to keep a shut mouth. I've work to do."

Goatry held out his hand. "I'm with you. If you get him this time, clamp him, clamp him like a tooth in a harrow!"

Halbeck had stopped his horse at the post-office door. Dismounting he looked quickly round, then drew the reins over the horse's head, letting them trail, as is the custom of the West.

A few swift words passed between Goatry and Foyle.

"I'll do this myself, Jo," he whispered to the girl presently. "Go into another room. I'll bring him here."

In another minute Goatry was leading the horse away from the post office, while Foyle stood waiting quietly at the door. The departing footsteps of the horse brought Halbeck swiftly to the doorway, with a letter in his hand.

"Hi, there, you damned sucker!" he called after Goatry, and then saw Foyle waiting.

"What the hell . . . !" he said fiercely, his hand on something in his hip pocket.

"Keep quiet, Dorl. I want to have a little talk with you. Take your hand away from that gun—take it away," he added with a meaning not to be misunderstood.

¶

HALBECK knew that one shout would have the town on him, and he did not know what card his brother was going to play. He let his arm drop to his side. "What's your game? What do you want?" he asked surlily.

"Come over to Happy Land," Foyle answered, and in the light of what was in his mind his words had a grim irony.

With a snarl Halbeck stepped out. Goatry, who had handed the horse over to the hostler, watched them coming.

"Why did I never notice the likeness before?" Goatry said to himself. "But, gosh—what a difference in the men! Foyle's going to double-cinch him this time, I guess."

He followed them inside the hall of the Happy Land. When they stepped into the sitting-room, he stood at the door waiting. The hotel was entirely empty, the roisterers at the Prairie Home having drawn off the idlers and spectators. The barman was nodding behind the bar, the proprietor was moving about in the backyard inspecting a horse. There was a cheerful warmth everywhere, the air was like an elixir, the pungent smell of a pine tree at the door gave a kind of medicament to the indrawn breath. And to Billy Goat, who sometimes sang in the choir of a church not a hundred miles away—for people agreed to forget his occasional sprees—there came, he knew not why, the words of a hymn he had sung only the preceding Sunday:

"As pants the hart for cooling streams,
When heated in the chase——"

The words kept ringing in his ears as he listened to the conversation inside the room—the partition was thin, the door thinner, and he heard much. Foyle had asked him not to intervene, but only to stand by and await the issue of this final conference. He meant, however, to take a hand in, if he thought he was needed, and he kept his ear glued to the door. If he thought Foyle needed him—his fingers were on the handle of the door.

"Now, hurry up! What do you want with me?" asked Halbeck of his brother.

"Take your time," said the ex-Sergeant Foyle, as he drew the blind three-quarters down so that they could not be seen from the street.

"I'm in a hurry, I tell you. I've got my plans. I'm going south. I've only just time to catch the Canadian Pacific three days from now, riding hard."

"You're not going south, Dorl."

"Where am I going, then?" was the sneering reply.

"Not farther than the Happy Land."

"What the devil's all this? You don't mean you're trying to arrest me again, after letting me go?"

"You don't need to ask. You're my prisoner. You're my prisoner," he said in a loud voice, "*until you free yourself.*"

"I'll do that damn quick, then," said the other, his hand flying to his hip.

"Sit down," was the sharp rejoinder, and a pistol was in his face before he could draw his own weapon.

"Put your gun on the table," Foyle said quietly. Halbeck did so. There was no other way.

Foyle drew it over to himself. His brother made a motion to rise.

"Sit still, Dorl," came the warning voice.

White with rage, the freebooter sat still, his dissipated face and heavy, angry lips looking like a debauched and villainous caricature of his brother before him.

"Yes, I suppose you'd have potted me, Dorl," said the ex-sergeant. "You'd have thought no more of doing that than you did of killing Linley, the ranchman; than you did of trying to ruin Jo Byndon, your wife's sister, when she was sixteen years old, when she was caring for your child—giving her life for the child you brought into the world."

"What in the name of hell—it's a lie!"

"Don't bluster. I know the truth."

"Who told you—the truth?"

"She did—to-day—an hour ago."

"She here—out here?" There was a new cowed note in the voice.

"She is in the next room."

"What did she come here for?"

"To make you do right by your child. I wonder what a jury of decent men would think about a man who robbed his child for five years, and let that child be fed and

clothed and cared for by the girl he tried to destroy, the girl he taught what sin there was in the world."

"She put you up to this. She was always in love with you, and you know it."

There was a dangerous look in Foyle's eyes, and his jaw set hard. "There would be no shame in a decent woman caring for me, even if it was true. I haven't put myself outside the boundary, as you have. You're my brother, but you're the worst scoundrel in the country—the worst unhanged. Put on the table there the letter in your pocket. It holds five hundred dollars belonging to your child. There's twenty-five hundred dollars more to be accounted for."

The other hesitated, then with an oath threw the letter on the table. "I'll pay the rest as soon as I can, if you'll stop this damned tomfoolery," he said sullenly.

"You'll pay for it, I suppose, out of what you stole from the C.P.R. contractor's chest. No, I don't think that will do."

"You want me to go to prison, then?"

"I think not. The truth would come out at the trial—the whole truth—the murder, and all. There's your child, Bobby. You've done him enough wrong already. Do you want him—but it doesn't matter whether you do or not—do you want him to carry through life that his father was a jail-bird and a murderer, just as Jo Byndon carries the scar you made when you threw her against the door?"

"What do you want with me, then?" The man sank slowly and heavily back into the chair.

"There is a way—have you never thought of it?—when you threatened others as you did me, and life seemed such a little thing in others—can't you think?"

Bewildered, the man looked around helplessly. In the silence which followed Foyle's words his brain was struggling to see a way out. Foyle's further words seemed to come from a great distance.

"It's not too late to do the decent thing. You'll never repent of all you've done; you'll never do different."

The old reckless, irresponsible spirit revived in the man; he had both courage and bravado, he was not hopeless yet of finding an escape from the net. He would not beg, he would struggle.

"I've lived as I meant to, and I'm not going to snivel or repent now. It's all a rotten business, anyhow," he rejoined.

With a sudden resolution the ex-sergeant put his own pistol in his pocket, then pushed Halbeck's pistol over towards him on the table. Halbeck's eyes lighted eagerly, grew red with excitement, then a change passed over them. They now settled on the pistol, and stayed.

He heard Foyle's voice. "It's with you to do what you ought to do. Of course, you can kill me. My pistol's in my pocket. But I don't think you will. You've murdered one man. You won't load your soul up with another. Besides, if you kill me, you will never get away from Kowatin alive. But it's with you—take your choice. It's me or you."

Halbeck's fingers crept out and found the pistol.

"Do your duty, Dorl," said the ex-sergeant as he turned his back on his brother.

The door of the room opened and Goatry stepped inside softly. He had work to do, if need be, and his face showed it. Halbeck did not see him.

There was a demon in Halbeck's eyes, as his brother stood, his back turned, taking his chances. A large mirror hung on the wall opposite Halbeck. Goatry was watching Halbeck's face in the glass, and saw the danger. He measured his distance.

All at once Halbeck caught Goatry's face in the mirror. The dark devilry faded out of his eyes. His lips moved in a whispered oath. Every way was blocked.

With a sudden wild resolution he raised the pistol to his head. It cracked, and he fell back heavily in the chair.

He had chosen the best way out.

"He had the pluck," said Goatry, as Foyle swung round with a face of misery.

A moment afterwards came a rush of people. Goatry kept them back.

"Sergeant Foyle arrested Halbeck, and Halbeck's shot himself," Goatry explained to them.

A white-faced girl with a scar on her temple made her way into the room.

"Come away—come away, Jo," said the voice of the man she loved; and he did not let her see the lifeless figure in the chair.

Three days later the plains swallowed them, as they made their way with Billy Goatry to the headquarters of the Riders of the Plains, where Sergeant Foyle was asked to reconsider his resignation—which he did.

Some Holiday Humours

Bank Holiday a Century Ago.

In our earlier days, we were a constant frequenter of Greenwich Fair, for years. We have proceeded to, and returned from it, in almost every description of vehicle. We cannot conscientiously deny the charge of having once made the passage in a spring-van, accompanied by thirteen gentlemen, fourteen ladies, an unlimited number of children, and a barrel of beer; and we have a vague recollection of having, in later days, found ourselves the eighth outside, on the top of a hackney-coach, at something past four o'clock in the morning, with a rather confused idea of our own name, or place of residence. We have grown older since then, and quiet, and steady; liking nothing better than to spend our Easter, and all our other holidays, in some quiet nook, with people of whom we shall never tire; but we think we still remember something of Greenwich Fair, and of those who resort to it. At all events we will try.

The road to Greenwich during the whole of Easter Monday, is in a state of perpetual bustle and noise. Cabs, hackney-coaches, "shay" carts, coal-waggons, stages, omnibuses, sociables, gigs, donkey-chaises—all crammed with people (for the question never is, what the horse can draw, but what the vehicle will hold), roll along at their utmost speed; the dust flies in clouds, ginger-beer corks go off in volleys, the balcony of every public-house is crowded with people, smoking and drinking, half the private houses are turned into tea-shops, fiddles are in great request, every little fruit shop displays its stall of gilt gingerbread and penny toys; turnpike men are in despair; horses won't go on, and wheels will come off; ladies in "caravans" scream with fright at every fresh concussion, and their admirers find it necessary to sit remarkably close to them by way of encouragement.

Charles Dickens.

Of all the days that's in the week
I dearly love but one day—
And that's the day that comes betwixt
A Saturday and Monday;
For then I'm drest all in my best
To walk abroad with Sally;
She is the darling of my heart
And she lives in our alley.

Henry Carey.

The Point of View.

We once encountered a set of boys as romantic. It was at no greater distance than at the foot of a hill near Hampstead; yet the spot was so perfectly Cisalpine to them, that two of them came up to us with looks of hushing eagerness, and asked "whether, on the other side of that hill, there were not robbers"; to which the minor adventurer of the two added, "And some say, serpents." They had all got bows and arrows, and were evidently hovering about the place, betwixt daring and apprehension, as on the borders of some wild region. We smiled to think which it was that husbanded their suburb wonders to more advantage, they or we; for while they peopled the place with robbers and serpents, we were peopling it with sylvans and fairies.

Leigh Hunt.

Change as Good as Rest.

THE ideal holiday, which is also the absolutely rational, solidly hygienic one, is not a change of air or place, but a complete change of work. If a man has nothing else to do, he thinks, and overthinking is incomparably more deadly than overworking. Each of us is fully satisfied, privately, that his own work is harder than anybody else's, so there should be no difficulty in effecting an occasional exchange of occupations; by simply taking over each other's tasks for a couple of weeks or so yearly we should, judging by what we tell each other, be sure of an easier time, and the work being fresh to us would be as amusing as playing what we call games, and more useful.

Personally, I admit, I have all my life hankered to escape from books and pens and lazy gardening, and enjoy a strenuous spell of digging up roads and laying drain pipes. I often stand and envy the men who are doing that; it seems to me they must be revelling in a continual holiday. Putting the pipes down, fitting one neatly in at the end of another, reminds me irresistibly of a game of dominoes; and when the road is being dug up, the iron pin being driven into the earth and two men hammering at it, to me it looks better and more gymnastic than golf. By changing places with a mason, any sensible citizen might carry bricks up ladders, balance himself with wheelbarrows on narrow planks, and, indeed, secure all the exertion, peril and excitement of mountaineering in such a modified form as would be suited to his general habits and training; the danger of falling would be minimised; there would be no hotel nor travelling expenses; and he would have a happy consciousness of doing something that was at once useful to the community and amusing to himself.

A. St. John Adcock.

Surrender to the Holiday Spirit.

HOW the day fits itself to the mind, winds itself round it like a fine drapery, clothing all its fancies! Any holiday communicates to us its colour. We wear its cockade and favours in our humour.

R. W. Emerson.

Impression on a Holiday Tour.

NEWARK—noted for its fine breed of fat mosquitoes—sting through the thickest boot—story about *Gallynipers*—Archer Gifford and his man Caliban—jolly fat fellows;—a knowing traveller always judges everything by the innkeepers and waiters;—set down Newark people all as fat as butter—learned dissertation on Archer Gifford's green coat, with philosophical reasons why the Newarkites wear red worsted night caps, and turn their noses to the south when the wind blows—Newark academy full of windows—sunshine excellent to make little boys grow—Elizabeth-town—fine girls—vile mosquitoes—plenty of oysters—query. have oysters any feeling?—good story about the fox catching them by his tail—ergo, foxes might be of great use in the pearl fishery;—landlord member of the Legislature—treats everybody who has a vote—mem, all the innkeepers members of Legislature in New Jersey;—Bridge-town, vulgarly called *Spank-town*, from a story of a quondam parson and his wife—real name, according to Linkum Fidelius, Bridgetown, from *bridge*, a contrivance to get dry shod over a river or brook; and *town*, an appellation given in America to the accidental assemblage of a church, a tavern, and a blacksmith's shop—Linkum as right as my left leg.

Washington Irving

Some Holiday Humours

The Inspiring Time-Table.

I HAVE been looking through the time-table to see if I could find a nice quiet spot where the fare is not too mountainous and only man is vile; and in my search I came upon a place called Ynysybwl.

I think I should rather like to go there. It is in Wales, I believe, but otherwise it's quite good. The only drawback—well, can't you see me going up to the booking office, with a bag in each hand, a tennis racket under one arm, and a brassie-driver under the other, and saying:

"A third return to—a third return to—— No, only one, please. A third return to Ith-Inith—Ithin—Oh, blow! I had it on the tip of my tongue just now. Inteet to goodness I did. A third return to Ithin—Inisth—— Look here, what's the next train to Brighton?"

I'm afraid I shan't be able to go to Ynysy—what's-his-name until I get a hare lip.

But some of these places in the time-table have a whole world of music in them. They smell of the woods and the good red earth, and make one long for the langorous days of mid-summer.

Take Cambridge Heath. . . . Can't you hear the drone of the bees swimming across the purple heather, the distant mutter of a peaty brook bubbling over the boulders? . . . Far off I catch the tinkle of the sheep bells where the white flocks feed on the peaceful slopes of Hackney Downs. Oh, very well! We'll change the subject. F. W. Thomas.

The Relief of Play

PLAY is a serious amusement, that comes to the relief of a man of pleasure after the more lively and affecting enjoyments of sense. It kills time beyond everything; and is a most admirable Anodyne to divert or prevent thought, which might otherwise prey upon the mind. Alciphron

Mrs. Rambottom on Brighton and Margate.

WE came last from Margate, which to my mind is far prefferible to Briton. At Briton you have always the great bright sparkling Ossian sufeiting the jingle from morning till night, enough to put one's eyes out, and drive one deaf—at Margate there is a beautiful arbour, in which there is no water whatsomever for twelve hours out of every twenty-four, which affords the curos observer a full view of Ossian's bottom: besides, instead of nasty hard jingle and stones, it is all beautiful blue mud, the sight of which, added to the smell of the juice from the gash works above, reminds one of the dear Mephistopholis, to the neighbourhood of which we have returned.

Then the Peer at Margate is quite a different thing from the jigumaree, swing swang, jinkum linkum thing at Briton. At Margate it is all fixed—built of white stone, and painted pee-green on the inside, which makes it look quite beautiful, besides, at Briton you see nothing partiklur on the Chain peer but the sea, and the company, and the clifts, and the vessels; but at Margate, beside all the predestinarians a walking, you have stage coaches, flies, waggons, cars, and sociables, ready to take you all over the country, not to speak of carts a fetching coals out of the arbour, and men at the Jetty a-bringing in fish alive out of the sea.

The church here is beautiful—not like Briton, stuck down in a vally; it is up on the top of the hil, so that one is half-way to heaven before one is a quarter of the way to church.

Theodore Hook.

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Waffles

Of a humble stowaway who paid his passage

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

THE second mate found him when he went to his cabin just after the barque *Hemro* had cleared the harbour heads and was running out to sea. Inside the cabin door, on the faded red carpet, he crouched, as miserable and as forlorn a specimen of a dog as the young sailor had ever seen.

" Hallo ! " said the second mate, bending and tickling him behind the ears, " how the devil did you get here ? "

The dog whined uneasily. His battered stump of a tail thumped the carpet. Feebly he poked out his tongue and licked the hand that caressed him. The second mate felt along his ribs and whistled. The dog was nothing but a bag of bones. His golden wire hair was drenched with the rain, mud caked his paws. Once he had evidently been something of an Irish terrier.

" Gee whiz ! " muttered the young officer, rising to his feet, " I wonder how long you've been here ? Climbed aboard this morning sometime, when it was still dark, eh ? I dunno what to do with you. The ' old man ' hates dogs. I guess you'll go overboard before you're much older."

He paused and scratched his head. He was a very young officer, the youngest aboard. The mate and the captain were both hard-bitten old grouches. There was a weary long voyage ahead ; and the young officer needed company. He looked thoughtfully at the dog. The dog looked up at him, whimpered and wriggled appealingly. There stirred in the second mate the age-old longing of man for a hunting companion, for a friend to be trusted, for someone to sit by the fire with him and warn him of the night dangers. And for the same reason that his skin-clad ancestors had taken wolves and tamed them, the second mate of the *Hemro* bent again and patted the starving dog's head.

" All right, old man," he laughed, " you can stay. I'll run you from now on. If you ain't a sailor now, you will be when we get home. Stand up you—you Waffles you. That's a good name. Stand up. Waffles, and come with me."

He backed out of his cabin, in the low deck-house abaft the mainmast, snapping his fingers. Whining, the dog followed, weakness causing his legs to drag, his tail down, his ears flat, his eyes wide on the chuckling man.

" Doctor, give my dog some scraps, will you ? " said the officer to the cook when he reached the galley with his charge.

The white-aproned, pot-bellied, stumpy cook looked down on the dog and sniffed.

" A dawg ! Crikey. Wait till the ' old man ' sees it ! . . . Scraps, sir ? Aye, aye. Come here, you miserable-lookin' lump of mischief. What's 'is name ? "

" Waffles," said the second mate.

" Waffles, come 'ere an' eat."

The cook's smooth moon-face, bright red from long years of standing before galley fires, slid into a smile as he watched the hungry dog bolt the scraps of meat and vegetables he placed on the galley deck.

The second mate leaned against the door-jamb, one foot on the step. He scratched his head and tilted his peaked uniform cap well back. A fine young man was he, big and bright-eyed, broad-shouldered, tanned, clean shaven, his short throat well muscled. His uniform jacket was unbuttoned and swung open ; the front of his grey flannel shirt was unbuttoned, too. Nearly always laughter curved his lips.

A footstep sounded on the deck planking, a slow methodical footstep. A deep voice demanded : " What's that you've got in there ? "

The face of the cook lost its grin. The second mate's eyes ceased to twinkle. Both men turned slowly, the second mate removing his foot from the doorstep and commencing to button his jacket up. The captain stood in the opposite doorway, frowning down at the feeding dog, who

watched him from the corner of one eye and with one ear cocked up.

'A dog, sir," said the second mate uncomfortably.

"So I see," snarled the captain. "Pitch it overboard!"

The cook mumbled, "Yessir," in a low voice and stooped to pick up Waffles, who backed away and growled. The second mate flushed and stuck his hands in his trousers pockets. His obstinate jaw set hard.

"Leave him alone," he said distinctly. "He's my dog."

The captain stiffened and frowned. He was a burly man, black-bearded, grey-eyed, his face lined with the weather and years of dissipation. He glared from under the low-pulled peak of his cap at the group before him.

"Your dog be damned!" he said. "I won't have a dog on my ship. Throw it overside, cook."

"You leave it alone," snapped the young officer hotly. The cook hesitated and looked from one man to the other. "It's my dog and I'll look after it. If you want to pitch it over, you'll have to pitch me over first, sir."

"You'll keep your mouth shut, and do as you're told, Heelly," the captain snapped, his eyes blazing. "I warn you if that dog comes my way I'll shoot it. You'll pay for its keep till then."

He turned and strode away, muttering darkly in his beard. The cook shot a scared look at the second mate.

"You'd better get rid of the animal, sir," he mumbled. "You know what the 'old man' is with dogs. He'll shoot the thing before long."

"Oh, shut up, doctor!" the other snorted wrathfully. "I look after the dog. You just save scraps to give him and leave the rest to me. Why, hang it all, I never had a dog before!"

The cook sighed and shook his head as he turned to his stove and banged a frying-pan viciously to prevent some steak burning.

The mate recovered a little of his good temper. He snapped his fingers and the dog looked up eagerly, licking his chops.

"Come on, Waffles," he said; "if you're finished, I'll give you a drink. Skipper or no skipper, you're my dog, and that's all there is to it."

His new-found possession at his heels, he left the galley and went to where the water-butt stood on its racks with a square of canvas sheltering it.

On the poop the wrathful captain was saying to the sour-faced, lean mate: "The second's got a damned dog! If the brute comes on the poop or interferes with the ship's work, kick its blasted ribs in! I'll shoot it if it comes near me."

To which the mate, a somewhat melancholy individual, aged and sea-weary, answered: "Aye, aye, sir. Kick his blasted ribs in, sir!" The captain grunted after that and went below.

The *Hemro* yawed idly, swinging from side to side as she raced along. The wind was right astern and somewhat gusty. Grinning a little the mate walked aft to the binnacle and peered into it.

"Make the course good," he said.

And the helmsman answered as he spun the kicking wheel: "The course good, sir."

Then the mate walked to the for'ard taffrail and cupped his hands round his mouth.

"Take another reef in yer tops'ls!"

Came a faint answer from for'ard against the freshening breeze:

"Take another reef, sir!"

The fore and main rigging shook under the shoes of climbing men. Astern the coast of northern New Zealand faded into the horizon.

II

ON the second day out Waffles fell foul of the captain.

His new master had taken good care to keep the dog shut in the cabin as much as possible. He only allowed Waffles on deck when he was there himself to stop the dog from going on the poop. But this time he happened to be asleep during his watch below.

The weather being warm he had hooked-shut the door before turning in. The steward had come along to clean out the room, unhooked the door, and the whining, much-improved Waffles was free and running excitedly along the main deck, sniffing at everything that came his way. He must have been a sea dog, for he exhibited a strange familiarity with a ship's gear. The boom of the wind in the canvas overhead and the rattle of the blocks in no wise worried or frightened

him. More significant than all, he was not sea-sick.

The captain had come down from the poop, and was going for'ard to inspect the fo'c'sle and see whether the boy told off to keep it clean was doing his duty. Waffles, eagerly chasing a fragment of rope-yarn blown across the foredeck by the wind, got mixed up in the captain's unsuspecting legs.

The captain side-stepped hastily, swore, and took a running kick at the dog, now busy worrying the rope-yarn. The captain's heavy shoe took him in the side and sent him, surprised and snarling, with a jar against the bulwarks. He came back like a rubber ball, all bristling teeth and writhing muscles. He snapped at the captain's leg and ripped his trousers at the knee.

With an oath the bearded master sprang for the rail, tore out a belaying pin and hurled it savagely. Waffles dodged. Perhaps he had had such things thrown at him before on other ships. He rushed again and nipped the captain's calf. The captain kicked and missed, and then retired profanely and precipitously for the poop, Waffles snapping at his heels.

"My revolver," the captain snarled, as he stumbled down the companion from the poop deck to the saloon and to his cabin. Waffles sat on his haunches at the foot of the companion from the main deck and sniffed, his red tongue hanging out and his head cocked on one side, wondering what was coming next.

"Go away, laddie," called down the sour-faced mate softly, leaning over the taffrail. "Go away, laddie, or ye'll find a watery grave. Haven't ye enough sense not to touch a shipmaster? Shame on ye. Shoosh! Go away. . . . Hopkins!" The mate called to an A.B. who was oiling down a backstay near the mizen port sheer pole and watching the scene with amusement.

The man dropped his fragment of black waste into his oilpot and came down to the deck.

"Run along and tell the second to get his dog," the mate said in a low voice, for fear the captain might hear him.

The seaman nodded and grinned more expansively. "I'd better take him," he said.

The mate grunted, "Good idea."

The seaman stepped forward, hesitated as Waffles growled, and then stretched forth a cautious hand.

"Come on, Waffles," he crooned. "Come on to yer daddy afore the skipper shoots ye. Come back to yer home. Good dog!"

Waffles looked interested, ceased to growl, wagged his tail. Next moment the seaman had him under his arm and was hurrying towards the second mate's cabin, the dog protesting loudly. The second mate stopped the noise as soon as he was awakened and told what was happening. And Waffles was gagged and bound and thrust into a very dark locker for awhile.

All that afternoon the captain searched, revolver in hand, "for a blasted dog that ought to be dead!" Also he poked his head inside the second mate's cabin every half-hour or so, glowered at the apparently sleeping officer, and listened intently for any noise. And several times the second mate and he passed long minutes in hot argument, when the former woke up for awhile, respective rank forgotten. The captain loathed dogs, but at the same time he wasn't the sort of shipmaster who cared to rule his officers with too high a hand. That only meant constant trouble and inefficient work.

The captain did not find Waffles. Nor did the dog appear on deck again for several days, not until the captain had put his revolver away and recovered some of his cantankerous temper. It was noticeable that Waffles bore the captain no grudge. He never barked at him when he saw him. He proved a good-tempered dog. Perhaps he knew what others aboard guessed, that the captain's bark was lots worse than his bite.

At last the *Hemro* slid into the "Doldrums," and the great calms held her captive. Her full spread of canvas slatted and cracked, her decks reeled and tossed to the endless glassy swell. At night flying-fish scattered over the bulwarks and threshed about the planking. The crew welcomed them, for they made good eating. Waffles was wont to snap them as they made to fly overside again. Like the crew, he welcomed them too.

Every night the stars grew big and hot and seemed to come down from the velvet sky to play in fantastic queer shafts across the water. Occasional whales sported about. Dolphins, albacore, all the phenomena of the life of the greater deep appeared, hunted, killed, played, or died, and vanished.

Day after day the sun drifted from horizon to horizon, hot burning to the

eyeballs. And the barque reeled and rolled and baked and waited for the wind that was so long in coming.

On such nights and on such days the second mate dozed fitfully during his watch below on the top of the midship house, where his cabin was. And by the side of his mattress Waffles dozed, head on paws, bright eyes half closed and watching the heave and fall of his master's breast. Whatever loyalty he had given to past masters, there was no doubt of his loyalty and love for his present possessor.

The crew amused themselves in various ways. There was little to do as regards ship's work, except repeated washing down to keep the wooden decks and the boats in good shape. The men fished, made mats and fancy rope baskets, seabags, picture frames of cigar-box wood, and ditties. They swam in the cool of the morning and the evening.

It was one morning while some were swimming, the same morning that the first of the breeze came, when it happened. The sun had not yet appeared, but the soft blue sky was alight with golden shafts and the line of the horizon was blazing.

Near the barque a raw-boned Swedish sailor slid through the swells with powerful strokes, his white body glistening in the greenish water, his tanned neck, face, and hands showing very plainly against the rest of him. A little sandy-haired cockney swam chirpily by him, and a black-moustached, stocky Dane was a little ahead and to his right.

The rest of the crew, officers included, hung over the poop and the main deck rail and listlessly watched the swimmers. Waffles was amidships with the second mate, his golden head thrust through an iron port that forced him inboard every time it swung shut when the ship rolled lazily.

One of the men hanging in the fore-rigging, where there was greater coolness, shouted suddenly and pointed. All heads turned first up to him to see where he was pointing and then looked away over the swells. The lean, triangular fin was not hard to pick up.

"Come aboard!" bellowed the captain from the poop to the swimmers.

"Shark! Shark!" bellowed and chorused the seamen midships.

The mate, standing near the captain, sprang to life and called the carpenter to him. There was a chance of sport, and any such chance was to be eagerly seized on in a calm.

It was good for officers to encourage sport. It kept the men in condition; kept them good-tempered. And so long as it did not interfere with ship's work, it was all right.

"Get your hooks on deck, Chips!" cried the mate, rasping his grey, unshaven chin with one long hand. "We'll try and catch the beastie. Tell the cook to bring some pork on the foredeck. Get a couple of men to rig a watch tackle on the fore-yard-arm."

"Aye, aye, sir!" murmured the pleased and grinning carpenter, looking up at the mate. He waddled away, a bow-legged wisp of a sailor, with a face the colour of mahogany and a mouth that stretched from ear to ear and made him extremely ugly. Like the mate he was dressed in thin blue cotton dungarees, with a white cotton shirt, a white, blue-peaked cap, peak backwards, covering his neck, and dirty white canvas shoes.

¶

MEANWHILE the swimmers were heading for safety. The cockney and the Dane reached the pilot-ladder lowered over the barque's side and clambered gasping to the deck. Once they leaned over the rail with their shipmates, their naked and dripping bodies rapidly drying, to watch the Swede frantically swimming for the ship.

The man was not a fast swimmer, and fear now caused him to muddle his stroke and lose a lot of headway. The triangular fin quickened and raised a little wave. The seamen on deck raced for the galley, secured some lumps of coal and flung them hastily at the great fish.

The shark was hungry, that was evident, for the splashing coal failed to drive him away. The captain brought his revolver from his cabin and took a shot, but the bullet glanced off the water and left the fish unharmed.

The Swede and the shark arrived at the pilot-ladder well-nigh together. The man heaved up as his clutching hands found the ladder. His eyes glistened with fear, his muscles were crawling and tense. His blond, drooping moustache and his hair were almost invisible now because he was so white, even his tan appearing to ebb away. He wrenched himself up three rungs

as the shark arrived with a rush beneath him.

Eager hands jerked the pilot-ladder inboard as the Swede climbed. The captain fired again and missed. Men were shouting, swearing, still throwing coal. The shark leaped clear of the water, open-mouthed. His teeth-filled jaws rang shut. He fell back with a great splashing. Blood spouting, the Swede sank sobbing at last on the foredeck. His right foot was gone.

" That," swore the mate, stamping across the poop and shaking his fist at the shark, swirling away in a circle of red-tinged water, " finishes you, m' son. . . . Carpenter, got those hooks ? "

" Aye, aye, sir ! " shouted the carpenter. " I'm getting the gear rigged."

The captain stuffed his revolver into his pocket and went down the poop companion, followed by the mate. The seamen were crowding midships round the injured Swede, who was calling out in frightened tones for the mate to come and look at his hurt. The two officers pushed through the seething, interested crowd.

They knelt beside the scared Swede and examined his ankle. It was in shreds. The mate pressed with his thumb on the artery and checked the blood. He looked at the captain, who mumbled and frowned.

" Hot tar's a good thing," the latter said. " Or can you fix it other ways ? "

The mate thought a while.

" I think I can. We'll use hot tar if other ways don't work. . . . You, Hopkins, run to my room and get that doctor book from the shelf over my bunk. And tell the steward to bring some hot water and the medicine chest along."

" Aye, aye, sir," called the seaman as he started aft.

The captain raised his hand.

" Just a minute, Hopkins."

The seaman stopped.

" Tell the steward to bring the brandy bottle from my locker."

" Brandy, sir ? Yessir." The seaman went on.

With most of the crew watching intently and talking in low tones, the two officers tended the hurt seaman. Swede, mate and captain emptied the brandy bottle between them before the operation started and while the two latter were studying up from the doctor's book. The liquor carried them through successfully. When the operation was finished most of the crew were feeling a trifle sick. The two officers were covered with blood. The Swede was unconscious.

" Take him on the fo'c's'le-head," said the captain, rising and wiping his hands on a bundle of stained bandage. " Put an awning over him. . . . Now where's that blasted shark ? "

Every man turned to the side save two, who picked up the Swede and took him away. The second mate had remained in the fore-rigging watching the lean fish swim agitatedly about the ship, evidently made hungrier by its fragment of a meal. Waffles had been barking at the shark whenever the port swung open and allowed him to poke out his head.

" Where is he ? " the mate called up to the second when he noticed where that young officer was. Waffles gave the answer in a ferocious volume of noise as the second mate pointed. The captain suddenly noticed the dog and scowled, but said nothing. It was too far away for him to kick. He turned his attention to the men who were finishing the rigging of the fishing apparatus.

The cook came from the storeroom with a side of fat pork that smelt like the brine tub from whence it had come. On the end of a fathom of chain a great barbed iron hook was fastened. The chain was bent to a stout manilla strop that was hooked to the tackle from the yard-arm. The cook stabbed the pork on to the hook.

" Lower away ! " sang out the mate. A couple of seamen overhauled the tackle, and one man, who stood on the main deck, slacked the strop between his hands till the pork and hook struck the water.

Overside leaned all hands and watched, hardly daring to breathe. Even Waffles ceased barking, as though struck dumb with the tension, though he still growled deep in his throat. The shark swam up to the pork with a rush, opened his mouth as though to swallow it. Then, suspicious probably of the chain, he shut his mouth, backed off and edged around the bait. A sigh of expectation went up from the seamen.

The captain climbed on to the rail and balanced there, one hand clutching at a backstay. Imbued with some excitement he reached for his revolver with the evident intention of taking another shot at the fish below. In some way the hammer of the

gun caught in his pocket and he wrenched savagely at the butt to get the weapon clear. He let go the backstay. And at that moment the *Hemro* rolled in a trough.

It all happened very suddenly. There was an oath, a few startled shouts. a splash, and the captain was in the water. Dressed as he was he started to sink at first, struggling desperately to keep to the surface. The heavy revolver was not an aid to him and he couldn't get it free.

The mate ripped out a stream of oaths.

"The dory!" he shouted. "Some of you come along!"

He raced for the little, yellow-painted craft lashed upside down on the deck near the port bulwarks midships. Some of the seamen raced after him.

"Coal!" shouted the second mate from the forerigging. "Get some more coal, you men, and pelt the shark!"

Then he put his hands above his head, breathed deeply and dived forwards and outwards. He knew the captain was a poor swimmer. He thought of nothing else. He struck water with little more than a gentle splash and came up beside the fighting, struggling master.

"Steady, sir," he panted as he caught him under the arm. He held him up with one hand while with the other he pounded on the water surface.

The shark startled off from the pork by the splashes and the agitation, now came back. There was a smell of blood about the captain that was most attractive. It was the blood from the Swede, some of which still remained on the captain's clothes and hands. The shark had already tasted that blood. Also there was no suspicious-looking chain about either of these live pieces of squirming meat. Slowly at first, quickening, the great fish drove forward.

The dory cracked into the water, the opposite side of the ship. Three seamen and the mate tumbled into it. Hastily it was jerked around the barque's stern. But everyone knew it would be too late. The watching seamen groaned. One man fumbled at his hip for his sheath knife and hurled it savagely down on the shark's back.

There came a yelp and another splash. The seamen shouted frantically. They waved excited arms.

"You darned fool, Waffles!" screamed the second mate, raising himself from the water.

The captain gurgled, "Hell!"

The terrier was swimming with scrambling haste to where his master pounded on the surface and supported the captain. He whimpered as he paddled. He forged between the driving fish and the captain's black beard that now floated fanwise on the surface. He took no notice of the fish's fin. His eyes were fixed on the second mate's twisted face. He did not, could not know what was impending, but he did know a fierce thrilling desire to be at his master's side, to be with the man who had befriended him when that man faced danger. And danger was certainly near. The air reeked of it. The strange actions of the mortals told of it. More than all, Waffles could see it in his master's eyes.

Despite his predicament the captain mumbled, "You son of a gun!" and grinned.

"Come here!" yelled the desperate second mate, endeavouring to force himself and his burden nearer the dog. The dory raced down the length of the barque towards the group.

The shark, already made nervous by so many goings on, was startled anew by the interference of the golden-haired terrier. Suspicious always of danger, he swerved with a swish of his tail, skinning the captain's hand with his rough hide. He came shooting and curving back to investigate. Waffles, his attention drawn now to the fish, trod water and barked indignantly at him and backed against the captain, who chuckled between gasps. The dory arrived. The seamen backed water hastily.

"Come aboard, for God's sake," wheezed the breathless mate, leaning over the bow and jerking the captain up. "My nerves are gone for to-day. I can't stand much more."

"Take him," gurgled the bearded master of the *Hemro*, holding up Waffles by the scruff of the neck. The mate grinned and tossed the dog to the bottom boards. The captain was hauled over the gunnel a moment later. The second mate followed. Two of the seamen were hammering on the water with their oars to keep the shark off. A cheer went up from the barque's deck.

Once aboard, the dripping captain and the second mate gulped down the whisky the wise old steward had waiting for them, and waved back the enthusiastic seamen who wanted to shake hands. Not unpopular in his way, the captain. The second mate, too, came in for quite a lot of attention.

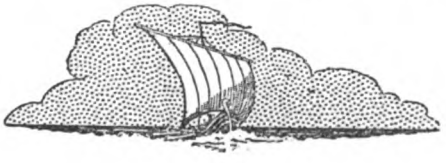
"Get that blasted shark, boys!" the captain roared. Then he looked down and frowned to see Waffles, his head on one side, looking up at him and wagging his tail, sending water drops flying in all directions. The captain's cold eye twinkled. "Which reminds me," he added, "that anyone I find ill treating this dog—what's his name? Waffles?—anyone touching Waffles will have to reckon with me. He's a man's dog, and that's all there is to it. Mister," he turned to the second mate, "bring him up on the poop and we'll give him some tinned chicken and milk. And thanks for giving me a hand. I shan't forget."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the young officer, wringing out his shirt in the scuppers and chuckling. He bent and picked the fawning Waffles up and tucked him under his arm. The seamen went back to the rail to get the shark.

The second mate and his dog followed the captain on to the poop and went below with him to the saloon. When they came on deck half an hour later the second mate was smoking one of the captain's cigars and Waffles was licking his chops and looking contented. Then he caught sight of a great, yellowish bulk threshing about on the foredeck with laughing seamen all round it. He rushed down the companion and tore for'ard, barking his very heart out.

The captain grinned and winked at the second mate.

"Some dog!" he said. Then he stiffened and turned his cheek to the port beam. "The wind, by all that's holy! Get your men at the braces, Mister Mate, as soon as they get that mess for'ard cleaned up!"



England and Englishmen

ENGLAND is the best of actual nations. EMERSON.

OF all the nations in the world there is none I know of so entirely governed by their humour as the English. DEFOE.

FOR he might have been a Roosian,
A French, or Turk, or Proosian,
  Or perhaps I-ta-li-an!
But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations,
  He remains an Englishman. SIR W S. GILBERT.

THERE are only two classes in good society in England: the equestrian classes and the neurotic classes. G. B. SHAW.

MINDS like ours, my dear James, must always be above national prejudices, and in all companies it gives me pleasure to declare that, as a people, the English are very little indeed inferior to the Scotch. JOHN WILSON.

WHEN a Frenchman and an Englishman think the same, you may be pretty sure that they are right. VOLTAIRE.

IT was always a trick of our English nation, if they have a good thing to make it common. SHAKESPEARE.

THE people of England are the most enthusiastic of the World. DISRAELI.

Coward or Hero?

When faith rises superior to the man

By K. SLUTCHEFSKY

Translated by Zénaïde A. Ragozin

Slutchefsky, who was originally a civil servant, began to write as early as 1860, and died in 1919. His stories differ from those of the modern Russian school, with which he was not in sympathy, but they possess a deep human appeal, and a penetrating insight into the slav temperament.

SOME thirty years ago a cutter, filled with very young men, cadets from a Government naval school, put off from a large man-of-war at anchor off the fiords along the southern shore of Finland. Some fifteen youths sat in the cutter, and with them a monk in his monastic garb. This was the ship's chaplain, Father Athanasius, an exceedingly timid man, noted for his awkwardness, which frequently gave occasion for a good deal of rather impertinent merriment at his expense on the part of the youngsters. Father Athanasius himself never took offence at this levity, and if they were sometimes disciplined more or less severely on that account, it was only because some more than usually audacious prank of theirs happened to fall under the personal notice of the authorities, who, in those days, were very strict and ready with punishments. In spite of the fact that Father Athanasius was absolutely guiltless of any part in these punishments, the youths vented their spite on him by redoubled railleries, and, but for the brevity of the navigation period, which usually lasted little more than three months, their mischief might have reached impossible proportions, for there were cases when the teasing took the form of practical jokes, which, with regard to a member of the clergy, could on no account be tolerated. If one were to search for the causes of so singular an attitude towards the monk, they would possibly be found partly in his long-suffering meekness and his steadfast impassibility—qualities which, in the end, have a way of irritating; but there was something else which might have had something to do with such abnormal perversity: it had become known that Father Athanasius had at one time graduated with high honours from one of the Government military schools and had been a brilliant, spur-clanking cavalry officer before he exchanged the uniform for the monk's robe, thus becoming, in a manner, a traitor to his caste. In those young heads, especially at that time, when they were fresh from devouring Lermontoff's novel, *A Hero of Our Times*, there was no room for any thought of the gross injustice they were doing the man by these wanton attacks, or of the intimate drama which must have preceded so momentous a decision as that of exchanging the helmet for the cowl—or, lastly, of the possibility that this might be one of the rare cases of a real vocation triumphing over birth, education and circumstances.

What the youngsters found particularly repulsive about the monk was his excessive timidity, which to them was simply cowardice, and which, on the present occasion, started them teasing and jeering the moment the cutter pulled off from the frigate, and the officers who stood at the side, watching them go, were out of hearing. An unexpectedly heavy swell caught up the cutter and caused it to rock so violently that it took in water right and left and the passengers were pretty well drenched.

"Suppose we get drowned, Father Athanasius!" began one. "We shall, you know, sure thing."

"Afraid, aren't you, Father?" joined in another.

"I am," simply answered the monk, timidly glancing at the water, which, owing to a suddenly overhanging storm-cloud, looked absolutely black.

"Besides," intervened a third, "should we keel over and have to swim for it, you will find your robe rather inconvenient!"

" True, it *would* be inconvenient," mildly agreed the monk.

" We will hold on to you, as to a balloon."

This sally was met by a loud, long, general peal of laughter—and the cutter, at that moment, as though to emphasise the warning, took in an unusually large load of water.

" For shame, gentlemen, stop your nonsense," loudly remonstrated Polivànoff, who was steering. " Can't you let a man alone? What did you invite Father Athanasius for, if you meant to make fun of him? *He* did not ask to come!"

" That's so!" a few voices replied in subdued tones. " That will do, gentlemen; don't!"

" Never mind! Let them," gently spoke the monk, casting on Polivànoff a look full of infinite kindness. " They are right: I *am* afraid."

" But then you are no sailor, Father," replied Polivànoff.

The cutter was fast approaching the rocky islets of the fiords. The general silence, which had succeeded the noisy talk and laughter was seconded by a sudden silence in the air. After rounding the point of the nearest islet, the young navigators found themselves in a narrow channel, beyond which opened a wider range of sea, studded, in its turn, with islets of various dimensions, separated by countless short and narrow straits, and with a still greater number of single cliffs of most fanciful outlines sticking out of the water, close to the islets. These were the famous so-called *scheræ*, extending in an unending monotonous procession along the southern littoral of Finland, and interrupted by the Gulf of Bothnia, emerging again along its western edge—along the Swedish shore.

Countless are these islets and cliffs, not one of which is in the least like any of the others, as countless as are the sinuosities of the sea, winding in and out, among and between them. And how the old cliffs would laugh at any attempt to subject them to any kind of statistical classification—there are so many of them! Nevertheless, what infinite, wearisome sameness! Spend a day or two in the fiords, and the endless whimsical variety of outlines somehow gets blurred into something like one, unchanging, unending algebraic formula; no matter how deeply you may penetrate, no matter how many of these islets you may pass or circumnavigate, they are still the same *scheræ*, the same cliffs, the same pines, interspersed with juniper shrubs; no homesteads, or almost none; only, here and there, a fishing station of some sort, to relieve this picture, which, although not devoid of a certain grand beauty, oppresses with its deadly monotony. Better, far better, the open sea; there, at least, is space for the eye to lose itself in, and for the imagination to people with fanciful creations.

It was decided to land on one of the larger islets; but it was only after several unsuccessful attempts that they could get close to the shore. The cutter repeatedly struck the rock with its prow and scraped the ground with its keel before it shoved itself in between two huge granite cliffs and stopped. Laying down the oars, the youngsters jumped over to the nearest low rocks, and, bounding from one to another, reached the shore with dry feet. Father Athanasius, however, found it not so easy; hindered by his long robe, he was slow in getting to the shore, because he was afraid the stones might turn under his feet, and so he stepped very gingerly from stone to stone, lifting high the hem of his robe, for fear of wetting it.

" Look at the bearded lady!" someone shouted from the shore.

The " bearded lady " meanwhile stopped short on the last stone but one, the distance to the next one being so wide that it required jumping.

" Here, Father, take the boat-hook!" cried Polivànoff, holding it out to him. " You have surely more than once in your life had occasion to jump. You can, can't you?"

" Certainly I can," answered the monk.

He went about it rather awkwardly, but did manage at last, with no further mishap than wetting one corner of his robe, which somehow slipped from his grasp.

There was some laughter at this, but it soon subsided. The youths scattered about the wood in twos and threes; group followed group; snatches of students' songs were heard. Suddenly a pistol-shot rang out and was caught up by the echoes. Father Athanasius, accompanied by Polivànoff, went in search of herbs, which they gathered for scientific purposes.

The island was not large, and the explorers, after dispersing, frequently met together again. Two unsuspecting ducks fell victims to well-aimed pistol-shots; one was knocked down with a stone. The sun had long passed the meridian, when someone somewhere called out:

"Let's have a shooting match! To the cutter, all! Set up a target!"

In less than half-an-hour, all, to a man, had assembled at the spot agreed upon and taken up positions on stones and on the grass. Some undertook to fix up a target. They cut some willow withes and bound them together as required. Then the pistols were loaded. Revolvers were still very scarce and only one was found in the crowd.

The monk seated himself apart, at the very edge of the water, and fell into a reverie, idly turning over his rosary between his fingers and, from time to time, casting sidelong glances at the young people.

"I expect, Father, you are scared of the firing," said one.

"Of course he is," joined in another.

"Why, yes; I really am," asserted the monk. "And what made you kill the poor innocent ducks? You will not even have a chance of roasting them; they will spoil and you will throw them away."

"That's all very well; but, all the same, you *are* scared of the firing."

"I am . . . but more of cannon. When they bellow and the ship shakes, one's very inside is shaken along with it."

A resounding "Ha-ha-ha!" burst from a group on the left of him, and was caught up by another on the right.

The target, meanwhile, was set up, made fast, and the crowd converged towards it.

"You know, gentlemen," unexpectedly declared the monk in loud, determined tones, "I cannot allow you to fire at the target."

Saying this, he did not rise from the stone on which he was sitting, somewhat apart from the rest. Exclamations poured in on him from all sides.

"Wha—a—at?" "Why?" "Ha-ha-ha! What's the idea, anyhow?"

"Impossible!" he simply affirmed.

"But why impossible?"

"Look well at your target," insisted Father Athanasius. "Whoever set up such a target? Do you not see that it has the shape of a cross?"

It was indeed as he said. The poles, one perpendicular, the other horizontal, were tied together in the shape of a cross with some sort of red rag at the point of intersection, on which it remained to fasten a numbered paper.

All eyes turned to the cross.

"Well, what of it, if it *is* a cross?" challenged someone.

"Oh! don't listen to him, boys! Fire away!" cried another.

"You shall not fire," quickly and loudly declared the monk, rising from his seat and surveying the young men, his widely-opened black eyes shining with such determination as they had never seen in them.

"And will you tell us, Father, *how* you intend to prevent us?"

"Thus," he answered, and deliberately, with firm step, he walked across to the target and stood before it.

There was a moment's silence; something utterly unexpected had happened, which left them perplexed and bewildered, with their thoughts in dire confusion. To begin with, they all felt this to be a most unpleasant occurrence and, seeing that waywardness and obstinacy enter for much into the mental equipment of very youthful brains, especially in the presence of comrades, these were the qualities which asserted themselves first.

"Don't get in the way, Father; step aside."

"We will drag you away by force."

"Such a crazy idea!"

"Come now, do get away from there!"

But the monk stood his ground, immovable as a stake driven into the soil. All in black, with the golden cross gleaming on his breast, with the dark shadow of a tall pine cast over him, as he stood impassible in absolute silence, he presented a striking figure amidst the surrounding granite boulders and cliffs.

"Fire away, boys! Scare him from the spot!"

"I'm going to fire!" warned one of the youths, pointing his pistol straight at the monk.

"Fire if you want to," answered Father Athanasius, covering the cross with his body.

There was the sound of a shot. It was directed towards the monk, but slightly slanted aside. He did not budge.

But the hearts of the youths did. They shuddered, and, at that instant, opened to new and better feelings.

The authorities never heard of what had occurred until several years later; but each year, as the time for the summer navigation approached, there was the liveliest interest among the cadets as to who should go with them as chaplain. Father Athanasius had endeared himself to them, by his modesty, his unvarying gentleness, and the flame which on rare, very rare, occasions, would kindle in his deep, black eyes.

One Block from Fifth Avenue

By IRVIN S. COBB

The genius of Irvin S. Cobb as a story-teller and his mastery of a difficult vernacular hardly need commentation. In this powerful love story, set in the environment of that great modern city which he has studied so searchingly, his qualities of sympathetic insight, pathos and gentle irony are illustrated at their best.—Ed.

WHIPPOORWILLVILLE is one of those places where the train stops twenty minutes for dinner, and the passengers who take a chance, have from ten to fifteen minutes to spare, dependent on how game they are. This gives them a chance to see the business district. They can see it in five minutes, or four, if they hurry, which allows ample time for them to get back on board and start wondering what the delay is all about before the locomotive comes to and goes on about its business.

To give you a further idea: No set of souvenir postcards showing views in and around Whippoorwillville has yet been printed; and the popular excitement throughout the country caused by the Eskimo pie, had practically abated nearly everywhere else in the South-Central States before it even reached here.

The town never had a boom. Its population increases very slowly and only because, as the vital statistics covering any healthful community will show, there are more births than there are deaths. Rarely does anything new go up, but occasionally something old falls down. In fact, Whippoorwillville is what you would call a finished town. Enlarging the fact, you might say it has been finished since the Civil War. The biggest thing that ever happened there was a clash between Union home guards and Confederate partisan rangers, raiding in for horses and recruits. This happened the fall after Fort Sumter was fired on, but the older citizens speak of it as though it had occurred within these past few months. But the biggest thing of recent years was when Letty Ember went to New York to prosecute her art studies in that great centre of culture and artistic endeavour.

Letty Ember was Whippoorwillville's acknowledged child of genius. She was its only such, so naturally her going away made talk beforehand and left a void afterward. Herself, she could not remember when the urge of her gift first came to her. It was on record in the family that almost from her cradle days on she had been, as the word is, " different." While other little girls were playing Lady-come-to-see and cutting out paper dolls she drew pictures of things and painted them with water colours. A paint box containing an assortment of pale lozenge-looking slabs and some very limber camel's-hair brushes with quills for handles, and two little mixing dishes like large, white, china buttons with the thread holes left out of them, was at six her most treasured possession. At school on Friday afternoons she was the one who was sent to the blackboard to write out mottoes and surround them with scrolls in red and white chalks. In a somewhat later period she won first prize at the Denton County Fair " for the best strictly original work of art executed by a resident of the county." Her offering was a study in oils—she had progressed by now to the stronger and more enduring medium—a fruit piece, showing apricots, pears, grapes and a slice of exceedingly ripe watermelon grouped on a marble slab. She was sixteen then and her father was postmaster under the second Wilson administration and they lived in one of the largest houses in town; the one with the two wooden cupolas on it and a railing around the roof, it being the same house which an architect from Boston, passing through on his way to Kansas City and seeing it from the car window, had said must certainly be the real Crime of 'Seventy-three.

When this honour came to Letty Ember, bestirring her ambition for achievements yet higher, she was absolutely self-taught; had never had a lesson. Her father was forever saying that one of these days he

was going to send Letty off somewhere to study under a regular professional painter. But he never got round to it. There were several things he never got quite round to—taking out more life insurance, for one thing, and cleaning the dead stock out of his drug store and putting in a soda fountain and paying off his notes in the Dentondale bank. Death caught up with him while he had all of these projects still vaguely in mind. Letty was just past twenty when diabetes overtook the loiterer.

Meanwhile, those four years between her sixteenth birthday and her twentieth had not been wasted. The walls of the Ember home attested her industry and her versatility. For the most part her canvases, inclosed in scrolled and shiny frames, were copies of what might be called standard subjects—Spearing Salmon on the Columbia River, the Monarch of the Glen, Our Darlings, the Grand Canal (Venice) at Sunset, Pompeiian Flower Girl, Kittens at Play, Pharaoh's Chariot Horses.

She was that bad!

She was worse than that. She had no part of talent in her, but only a laborious knack for laborious imitation. Had there been in her a single smouldering tiny spark of the fire called inspiration she would somehow have guessed a way through her ignorance and isolation, through her lack of craftsmanship even, to the rights of things. All about her were beauties that cried aloud in their loneliness for an artist to catch them and hold them in his webs of colour—the neighbourly foothills in winter-times under snow; the jade-green river bottoms in the spring; the woods in the fall, with the hickories yellowing up and the ash purpling and the sour-gum dripping leaves like drops of blood where it had been bitten in Jack Frost's first attack; bits of dusty roadside of the summer, when the wilted mullein lolled out its furred tongues to show how poorly it stood the heat, and the " nigger-heads " brocaded the shoulders of the turnpike with golden epaulettes; darky types and town characters and awkwardly picturesque country folks; faces, shapes, figures; shadows and lights and moods—on every side, tendering themselves to her in a spendthrift prodigality.

But she could not see them; the eyes of her soul were blinded to their wealth and their variety. Besides, there was nobody to tell her. So she went on desecrating ells of good cloth-weave with blobs of misused pigments. And Whippoorwillville's commonplace judgment held her as one favoured beyond the ordinary daughters of ordinary men.

She went on so and thus until her father for evermore put aside all earthly consideration of those unstarted plans of his. Her mother was already dead. She was the mistress of her own acts thenceforward and the estate which had been left by the lately deceased was hers now to do with as she might devise. It was not much of an estate. When the funeral had been paid for and the just debts settled, there was put into her hands a total amounting to slightly less than eleven hundred dollars. For the carrying out of her purpose she figured, though, it would be enough—if she stinted and stretched her pennies. To be sure there was the heavy item of her consolidated entrance fees and her student dues for the first quarter; these would necessitate a seriously large outlay at the very beginning. But with her native abilities and her willingness to work hard she should go ahead fast and go ahead far. For any immediate privations she would be bountifully repaid in a few months, or in a year or two, at most, when there came to her recognition, honours, repute. You must excuse her for her vanity. For so far back as her memory ran she had been fed on the honest praise and honest loyalty of a community where local pride made up for many things lacking.

Naturally, Whippoorwillville, considered as a whole, approved of her decision. Eddie Sackett did not, it is true; but then, Eddie Sackett scarcely counted, he being as one against many. For his part, he selfishly desired that Letty should bide where she was and keep on being engaged to him. He wrote the Whippoorwillville Notes for the *Dentondale Weekly Sun-Independent*, which paid him six dollars a week, and he made fifteen dollars a week more as depot agent. He had prospects of a raise in salary; the railroad had shown signs of being not unmindful of faithful service and painstaking attention to details. On the enhanced income, he figured, two might live almost as cheaply as one. Married to him, Letty could go on with her painting; by his word of honour he pledged himself to it.

But she had read somewhere that domestic life was crippling, nearly always, to a successful artistic career. a clog on the

winged foot of genius. She had visions of herself in a noble high studio fronting canvases of great price. With this vision were interwoven other delectable pictures in which she was invariably the main and central figure—the pet of the Four Hundred, accepting commissions from distinguished and worshipful patrons, taking medals at the Academy, cooking chafing dish suppers in a vastly becoming smock for guests recruited from the aristocracy of Bohemia, queening it at artists' revels.

This conglomerate vision came swiftly between her and the present sight of Eddie's hurt, grieving face; his counter-arguments were lost in the rolling of great drums. She told him her chosen work must come first; to it she must sacrifice all else—or at least for the next few years she must. She owed it to herself; she owed it to her art. For art's sake she had already decided to alter the spelling of her name. As Letitia she had been christened, Letty she had been called, but Leatrice she would hereafter be, both to her friends and to the general public. It was a name she had found in a moving-picture magazine. Immediately she had been drawn to it; she felt that it fitted. And he, in his journalistic capacity, might, if agreeable to him, be the medium of advertising the change to the world at large.

Leatrice—the very estate and sound of it seemed somehow to emphasise to him the depth and the width of the gulf opening between them. But he promised.

So Eddie, taking his bruised heart off his sleeve and putting it back in his breast to ache intolerably there, wrote for the top item of his weekly column one beginning: "All Whippoorwillville and vicinity are agog this week over the forthcoming departure of Miss Leatrice Ember, of here, rarely gifted daughter of the estimable late Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Ember, for the teeming metropolis of Greater New York City where she will——" and so forth and so on, twenty-odd lines of it, concluding with the ringing summary: "Our loss is Gotham's gain!"

He meant it, too, his valedictory flourish. You see, touching on Letty's future, Eddie had no doubts. Here, at least, he was in confident accord with his fellow-Whippoorwillvillians. This was what made the parting all the harder for him—this sincere conviction that he was giving her up for ever. You cannot hitch your depot agent to a star, and down in his soul Eddie knew it and by such knowledge was desolated utterly. Sense of an eternal loss drooped his shoulders as he walked across the echoing boards of the platform and into his little rabbit hutch of a station on a given date after Number Seven, eastbound, due in at six twenty-two, due out at six twenty-four, had pulled away, plumping straight into the round, red target of sun-up.

¶

NUMBER Seven was carrying her off to join an innumerable caravan which journeys to besiege a heaven-piercing city of admirable desires. It is a caravan that is formed of youth. Its baggage train is loaded with hopes. The quick march of optimism briskens its processional step. Blithe old General Ego rides on ahead, in full command. But ultimately—of course, there has to be an ultimately, else many folks would never wake up from their day-dreaming at all—the long casualty lists of disillusionment and despair will claim most of the names on this army's muster roll. Pardon me if here I seem to overstress the hyperbole; maybe I have been reading too many moving-picture sub-titles lately.

Even so, facts are facts, no matter what fine feathers of language you dress them up in. And it is a fact that New York is a place of immortal rewards and terrific mortality averages. But quoting percentage sheets never yet turned back a stripling's pilgrimage. You might just as well hang a *Keep-off-the-grass* sign on an oasis and expect the famished travellers from across the burning sands to read it and heed it and head back for home.

Just then, floundering about for metaphor, I said Eddie Sackett's beloved went, that morning, to join a certain caravan. Rather, I should have called it a children's crusade, for that precisely is what it is—a children's crusade recruited from the deep ranks of inexperience. The girl who sang so much better than the rest of 'em in the village choir; the youngster who made a sweepstakes of it in the crossroads class of elocution; the born hewers of wood, the predestined drawers of water, who nevertheless yearn to hew the dumb marble into lines of sculptured life and draw deathless pictures for a reverent posterity; a whole generation of mute, inglorious Miltons, aspiring to be mute no longer nor yet

inglorious; hallucinationists who diagnose as the pang of thwarted creation what is really the growing pains of their own mediocrity; auto-intoxicated adolescents mistaking the illusions of self-deception for a hankering after self-expression—by the dozen and the gross and the great gross they move on the city. Their going thither stands for dollars saved through patient sacrifice, for mortgages put on homesteads by flattered parents, for slender patrimonies to be spent, more often than not, on a vain quest.

You would be merely wasting your breath, though, did you, being wiser, try to warn the majority of them that inevitably and lamentably it must prove to be, for them, the very vainest of all possible quests. They are armoured against your warnings in confidence which, so many times, is only another name for conceit. Why should they listen to you? There, at her harbour's head, sits New York, the magic town. By virtue of a witchcraft resident in her, New York is going to provide them with those precious elements, which until now, through no inherent fault of theirs, they have been denied. It is New York that will make noble swans out of all the little awkward goslings, that will turn these drab sparrows of the hedgerow into birds of paradise, that is craving to graft the notes of the nightingale upon the feeble larynx of the sandpiper. New York with its opportunities, its advantages, its instinct for recognition; New York with its schools of applied design, its schools of interior decorating, its schools of the dramatic arts and the plastic and the graphic; its schools of expression, its schools of voice culture and of music; its schools for making finished moving-picture actors right out of the raw material—New York will somehow turn the trick. Good old appreciative, generous, discerning, observing, discovering New York!

So the stage-smitten amateurs who have neither grace nor personality, but only a pale mimetic quality, come hurrying to her embrace. And would-be writers of embroidered tales, who lack in imagination, in perception, in all sense for the right weight and the right colour of words—they come along, too. And the boy whom a niggardly nature designed with intent that he should spend his maturer years making neat blue stripes on the red spokes of new farm wagons—he comes. The trouble with him is he thinks he has been called into this earth to paint rings around the Old Masters. And with him, mayhap, comes his sister. But her happy delusion is, that, concealed somewhere about her trivial person, are the sweeping forces of a queen of tragedy.

They have gone as far as they could go in their restricted environment. Circumscribed and secluded as they have been, they have nevertheless felt the urge. They have triumphed above cramping circumstance; they have outgrown the small towns; behold, they have broken the bars. Surely, with the ambition that is in them and the feel of latent power that stirs them, they must go high and far there in New York where the horizons are so broad; where atmosphere and association make for development; where the producing manager stalks for hidden talent in the highway and fame is hiding around every corner eager to pounce forth and tag any unknown juvenile phenomenon.

But the truth is that New York is an Iron Maiden that takes them in her arms only to crack their young bones and squeeze out their blood. The reputable schools, the honest teachers, weed them out, keeping those who give promise of making dependable craftsmen, banning the rest. Some, discouraged at the outset and homesick and daunted by the chill indifference of the town, return whence they came. They are, by odds, the luckier of those who are discarded. Others, as yet unhumbled and more persistent in their belief in themselves, fall into the maws of sharks who ply a shark's trade of imposture and fakery on the marshy verges of the arts; and it is the lot of these victims to be carried along by cajolery and deceit and false guidance until they have been stripped of their savings, then, eventually, to be cast adrift.

Here and there is one who, by reason of having real merit, wins and wins magnificently. The name of such a one is advertised to all the land. But the losers are not advertised. And only God Almighty knows what an annual bumper crop there is of the losers—that same compassionate Almighty who hearkens to the heartbroken sobs of some poor child alone, except for Him, in a hall bedroom, three floors up and all the way back, with her head buried in the thin pillows to shut out the hateful face of failure. But if her Maker did not graciously deign to plant the seeds of genius in her when He put her forth into the world, how can even He now piece

together the scraps of her paltry, shattered little dream? Sooner or later, every Whippoorwillville sends its Letty Ember to the City.

But our present concern is with our own particular Letty Ember from this particular Whippoorwillville. Promptly, to Eddie and to others as well, she wrote back letters that were mainly punctuated with exclamation points; about every fifth word was heavily underscored. New York was so wonderful—three black lines for emphasis under the "so" and a big "!" to finish with. Photographs and souvenir cards and printed descriptions did not begin to do it justice—it must be seen to be appreciated! One felt that in New York one could breathe, could expand, could grow! Surely one would never have time to get blue or faint-spirited here with so much to see and so much to do and such splendid goals to work toward!

¶

TRUE, there had been one small vexation at the outset. She had not been able to get into the Art Students' League, as she had counted on doing. It seemed the classes were all full at present; but to offset this, though, she had had a perfectly glorious piece of luck. She had been so fortunate as to be brought into contact with a Professor Beckermann, a very distinguished foreign painter, who took for his pupils only such beginners as had recognisable talent. He had condescended to look at those typical examples of her work which she had brought along to show what she could do. And he had been so enthusiastic over them, so sure of her ultimate greatness! Indeed, he had consented to take her on for a series of private lessons.

She was to call him "Master"; all his scholars called him "Master!"

Under him she would have individual attention, while at the Art League she merely would have been one of a group. He had explained to her the eminent advantages of this over the class system. It was bound to be a tremendous help to her; she would go forward so much faster than otherwise she could hope to go. And Professor Beckermann was so picturesque, so unconventional in dress and manner, so charmingly Bohemian! With him, surroundings seemed to count for nothing; he lived solely for his art. And he had technique at his very finger-tips! And technique was all that she needed to land her at the very top of the profession. He had told her so himself. Wasn't she the lucky girl?

It must be confessed that living was very dear in New York. Everything cost ever so much more than the same thing would cost back home. And, of course, it was not to be expected that anyone, let alone a little stranger from the country, should have the benefit of the Master's skill and knowledge without paying for it. But putting up with a few discomforts now only meant that supreme success would be coming all the sooner. Good-bye and give her love to everybody. Already, Whippoorwillville seemed a million miles away. She was, in conclusion, Fondly, Leatrice.

Those first letters came in a white flock. It was as though she desired that at once and at first hand all her friends should know from her how promising the outlook was and how determined she was that they, who were so very proud of her, should never be disappointed in her. Later, there was a space—a very blank space for Eddie Sackett—when she did not write. To himself Eddie strove manfully to find excuses for her silence. She must be terribly busy; he could appreciate what heavy demands New York must be making upon her, socially and otherwise. Still, if only about once in so often—say, once every two weeks—she could steal the time to send him a line, that certainly would help him to bear the separation better. He kept on writing to her.

Finally a letter from her did come. It would appear that since he last heard from her there had been certain changes in her plans. For one thing, she had about decided, temporarily at least, to take up commercial designing—posters for advertisements and trade illustrations, etc., etc., etc.; she had been given to understand that these things paid very well. This, of course, did not mean that she had lost interest in her more serious work. That would always be her real forte. But she merely thought of adding on the other for the time being, as a sort of sideline. She did not mention Professor Beckermann in connection with this venture. In fact, she did not mention him at all this time; presumably he was to be taken for granted. Also she had another important piece of news: Eddie would be interested to hear that she was no longer staying in that

stuffy, crowded old boarding-house on West Fifty-seventh Street. She had rented "bachelor-girl quarters" farther down town, so that she might have her workshop right there in her own snug, quiet little housekeeping apartment. She was now—just think of it—in the very heart of the city, only one block from Fifth Avenue! And Eddie, of course, knew what Fifth Avenue was—the street of the most fashionable shops and the most exclusive clubs, with many of the largest hotels and lots of the leading theatres within easy walking distance. She thought it would be rather nice if Eddie would be so good as to write one of his pieces, mentioning this fact, for the *Dentondale Sun-Independent*. Everybody in Whippoorwillville and probably a lot of other people in Denton County would be thrilled to hear where she had moved to. That is to say, he need not give the exact address which she now sent him; it would be sufficient if he stated that her present location was just one block from Fifth Avenue, with all its life and gaiety. (Signed) Affectionately, Leatrice.

¶

EDDIE did as requested. He was proud to do it, and Whippoorwillville was proud to read the tidings. He sent on the printed clipping of what he wrote in his next letter, which went forward three days later, immediately after the current week's issue of the paper came out. In the letter he rather betrayed his private feelings. He admitted too deep regret that she seemed to be forgetting those at home who cared for her; at least, she certainly was neglecting them so far as the United States mails were concerned. He appreciated the difference in their relative positions these days—he plodding along in a poky little backwoods hole, she going ahead so rapidly in the artistic circles of Greater New York City. But, with all that, he still only could *trust* and *pray* that she would not entirely cease to remember those *happy days gone by* which they had spent *together*. Eddie could do some underscoring himself when the occasion called for it.

A month later he got a scrap of a letter from her—no more than a dozen lines on one side of a half-sheet of notepaper. Reading it, he judged that some little thing must have upset her. It ran like this:

Eddie Dear,—I have not forgotten you. I'm not going to forget you. Nearly all the time these days I think of you and of those who really cared for me formerly and believed in me. Oh, Eddie, I couldn't ever go back home if I failed, could I? Oh, Eddie, it's awful hard sometimes to keep on being brave when you're all by yourself nearly always. I don't suppose there's any place where a person can get to be as lonely as they are in a big city.

LETTY.

Eddie decided she must have been very much upset indeed to forget that her name now was Leatrice. Well, the weather had been terribly hot all the week in Whippoorwillville. It must have been hot in New York, too. Maybe it was the weather that had got on her nerves.

He carried the letter about with him, reading it frequently and puzzling over it. It was the last letter he had from her. He was regularity itself, though—never let a week pass without writing.

One block from Fifth Avenue is Sixth. Now in New York, as has been stated by someone with almost an Old Testamental value of the strength of the repetitive, there are streets and streets. There are streets such as you may see in any one of half-a-dozen seaboard cities; and there are streets which in all main essentials might as well be the streets which parallel them. Parts of Eighteenth Street could be blended into Twenty-eighth or Thirty-eighth and nobody would mark the difference, because there wouldn't be any difference to mark; the materials would match. Avenue A and Avenue B are twins. I know a stretch in Tenth Avenue which seems to have been copied, with a rare fidelity, from a stretch in Eleventh.

Then again there are streets such as you'll find nowhere else; streets which, having each one its own special individuality, are never by any chance to be confounded with any other streets there or elsewhere. They are the lines of character in the face of the city.

Take Wall Street; that's a deep wrinkle of avarice in Manhattan's lower jaw. Take Riverside Drive. On second thought, don't; it already has been taken by gas tanks, bill-boards, Grant's Tomb, the New York Central tracks and miles of the homeliest apartment houses on this footstool—a natural glory spoiled by squatter sovereignty. Take Broadway, which in the night-time is a broad, yellow streak down the spine of

the town, but which by day is seen to be dying of the same diseases that killed the Bowery—over-advertisement and not enough nourishment. Take the Bowery, smelling of stale memories, a stiff in a dirty winding sheet. Take Fifth Avenue if you can afford it. And take Sixth when you can afford nothing else. She's guaranteed not to be too rich for your blood.

Measured by feet, they lie within the span of a seventh of a mile, roughly. Yet by all other standards they are a thousand miles apart. Three minutes of brisk walking takes you from one to the other, but takes you also into a distant world; there's a Great Divide between them. Fifth Avenue is always avowedly herself. With clumpings here and there, of big shops and hotels, bits of Sixth Avenue achieve a localised imitation of the rich sister—Cinderella trying on the silver slipper. But, mainly, Sixth Avenue keeps her own personality, too, and is frankly what Fifth might have been if Fifth hadn't had nearly all the luck in the family. Fifth is the front show-window; Sixth is the alley fence at the back. Even their currents flow contrariwise. Fifth runs uptown into billions; Sixth pours downtown into poverty. One lives on yellowbacks; the other thrives on the pennies. Fifth comes springing out of Washington Square to sweep irresistibly northward; Sixth goes sliding south from the haggard and consumptive trees of Central Park, to lose itself finally in some most dismal labyrinths of the Lower West Side. A dollar doesn't get you anywhere at all on Fifth; on Sixth a thin dime gives you a fair run for your money. One is whipped cream; the other mostly is what was left over when they got through with the skimming. Dives rides through Fifth; Lazarus shambles along Sixth, and scratches himself and panhandles as he goes. Multiply the similes for as long as pleases you; every time you'll get the same result.

A proper studio should have a north light. But the window in the room of this artist looked eastward. There was only the one window; the wall breadth could not have accommodated two and still leave a place for the head of the bed to go. Being an east window it looked toward Fifth Avenue, but of Fifth Avenue there was visible, from this point, only a fretted and formidable skyline that rose beyond a jumble of boxed-in courts, and odds and ends of lesser buildings, and queer-shaped slices of wasted space enclosed in high useless fences.

Also there was a tree. It was one of those trees which seem to grow exclusively in New York backyards. Such trees thrive on dampness and everlasting shade and the Monday drippings from somebody's clothes-line. They are curious, fronded trees which give off a sour smell when the sap rises in them in the spring and again when their leaves wither in the fall. I do not know the right name for them; let's call them backyard trees. They are to be seen only when the wreckers tear away the houses in front, thereby exposing an inner walled town of rear tenements and unsightly sheds, which until then had been unrevealed and unsuspected; or when you live, say, as in this instance, on the third floor, back.

When the occupant of the room in point wearied of her own private view, which was often, and when she had the time to spare on her hands, which was generally, she might, by walking the length of a short hall to a window at the farther end of this hall command a different outlook. Here, spread beneath, was life and plenty of it. The elevated, like a thousand-legged earwig, spraddled by just below her, with its striped back narrowing in perspective and finally diminishing off this way and that to nothing at all. And when the trains went past, like lesser insects scooting along up and down the spinal column of this greater one, their weight and their speed made the long, endless worm shake; and the grating of their wheels, for the moment, would almost drown out the sound of everything else.

The L structure chopped the vista short off at the downward angle. Even so, there was much to be observed by one stationed above. Within the compass of the block might be seen a taxidermist's shop, an undertaker's shop, a shop for the curing of raw furs, a misfit-clothing parlour where garments which had died once elsewhere came to undergo a purgatorial delay under hot irons and benzine before their next reincarnation; a painless dentist's, a loan parlour, called, by the vulgar, hock-shop; a bird and animal store advertising itself by its own aromas; a stationery store, a tobacconist, selling likewise daily papers and periodicals; a Yiddish lunchroom specialising in cold fried fish and strictly kosher hot frankfurters; a hat-cleaning establishment; a basement dweller who

dealt in ice, coal and kindling wood; a Greek employment agency, a club for Swiss waiters, head, side, and omnibus; two orangeade stands, an Italian green-grocer's, a hardware store, a second-hand furniture store, a museum of human anatomy—Boys under Sixteen Positively Not Admitted; a corner where a saloon has been, now For Rent, With or Without Fixtures; a boot-blacking stand, a jobbing house in artificial flowers, a trunk store which was always on the point of going immediately out of business and therefore offered sacrificial bargains in suitcases and grips.

Not all these were on her side of the street nor yet all on the ground levels. They began in the cellars and they mounted above one another, flight by flight, to the attics; but all of them and more besides in that same briefened stretch, from crossing to crossing, might be ticked off on the fingers by one who had leisure for such employment, as this one had; and sundry establishments among them might also be smelled, especially where two or three firms hived together as joint lessees of a single floor, pooling, as it were, the essential perfumes of their respective businesses.

Lesser merchandisers, of the itinerant cast, throve on the sidewalk trade, pre-ëmpting space for themselves in doorways and along curbstones and even out on the perilous roadway beyond the pavement line, and holding their ground against a clamorous and occasionally a threatening opposition. One day, warranted all-silk neckties seemed to have the favour of these ardent competitors; about every other one of them would be offering silk neckties at one for thirty-five, three for a dollar. Another day it would be bath sponges that they pushed, or patent pants-hangers at ridiculously low prices, or roach poison in handy packages. But the pretzel vendors never sought to tempt the popular fancy with new wrinkles. Their stocks, coiled like varnished brown snakes on upright spindles stuck around the edges of baskets or pushcarts, were staples, dependable and in constant demand. This was likewise true of the dealers in dill pickles; they, likewise, knowing their public and having their regular clientèles.

Always, in the daytime, the avenue crawled with motion and went clanging the cymbals of industry. It was most active, though, and rivalry for customers reached the highest peaks at noontime when the loft workers came downstairs for lunch and air and conversation; surface vehicles could scarcely get through the wedged pack then. There were two Jewish men of this persuasion who daily stationed themselves in an areaway almost directly under the window where our lodger watched, coming together for the resumption of an argument which, it seemed, would never be ended. In time she came to know both of them and to be on the outlook for them. In a dulled sort of way they fascinated her; their inevitable appearance made an interlude in the deadened monotony of her own midday. One of them, a small, shabby man, talked with his mouth, his shoulders, his legs, his arms, his collarless neck and his hands—notably with his hands. His hands were for ever in motion. Frequently, in the fever of debate, his fingers clutched the air as though he would seize argument out of the ether. His antagonist, a second-generation American and dressed accordingly, rarely spoke and never gesticulated. He expressed all varying emotions—contempt, doubt, acquiescence, denial, conviction, wavering—by three mediums, to wit, his eyebrows, his underlip and the cigar that teetered between his teeth. His silence, somehow, was infinitely more potent than all the outcry of the posturing adversary. He had probably the most sceptical pair of eyebrows in the world, and the most eloquent lower lip. Certainly a more facile or a more oratorical cigar than his has never been rolled.

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YOUR true creator of pictures could find material here to keep him busy squeezing tubes for a year. For this place, with its grindings and shriekings and its overhead quiverings, with its swarmings underfoot, its countless eager concerned faces, its jamming together of nervous bodies, its swirls and masses, its stinks, even, was a profile and a perfect cross-section of life that fairly dripped with the city's essence. Its component parts fell naturally into panoramic groups, and its local colour was every colour of humanity there is. But, as was said some pages back, this one had not within her what a bona fide artist must have. To her it was a brazen desolation of ugliness and heartlessness and harsh sounds, peopled with alien breeds of men and women following noisily after alien gods—the strange gods that were so disregardful of the lonely and the forsaken.

Down yonder in Whippoorwillville, Eddie Sackett got so he just naturally couldn't stand it any longer. Faithfulness cannot feed for ever on itself; it needs more material provender, lest it starve to death outright. Anyway, from the standpoint of the economics, he was in position to take a trip. Out of its annual earnings and the fulness of its heart the railroad had at length seen its way clear to granting that raise in salary. Eddie put on his new mail-order fall suit and caught Number Seven, eastbound. It had been nearly four months now since that last puzzling short letter came to him, nearly eight months since he had seen its writer.

A common carrier deposited him at Grand Central in the latter end of an October forenoon. From the moment of his arrival, almost, New York began jolting him financially. He knew what hotel he meant to stop at; it was one that advertised in the *Dentondale Weekly Sun-Independent*, mentioning moderate rates for single rooms with bath. The directions concerning street cars which a policeman at a door of the station gave him seemed distressingly intricate. To be on the safe side he took a taxicab. And the taxicab literally ate up money. Nearly every time he looked at the meter it had jumped another ten cents. Eddie Sackett wasn't stingy, but in Whippoorwillville a dime was nevertheless a dime and you expected some proper return for it.

Then there was the hotel when he arrived there, a confusing, a mastodonic and, despite its printed promises, an expensive establishment. A clerk gave him a room at a rate per day which the clerk evidently regarded as a very reasonable rate. It was dinner-time now—dinner-time comes in the middle of the day at Whippoorwillville—and Eddie Sackett, for all his devotion, was none of your puling and pining lovers; Eddie was hungry. He asked the location of the dining-room and was directed to a place called the grill. But the tariffs, as set forth on the menu, were calculated to bitt his appetite. Moreover, there was a waiter of an aggressive aspect who exhaled in evident and audible impatience as Eddie ran a forefinger down the price list, and this fussed the new guest. In his flustered state his eye finally fell, half-way down the card, on a fish dish—fish *à la something*, with sauce *something else*—which alone, of all the items named, seemed reasonably priced.

He told the waiter he would take a piece of that, with coffee and bread and butter and fried potatoes. It was quite a long time before these things were brought and, after they had been brought and he had eaten, a genuine shock awaited him. The total cost of the meal, as scribbled on the check, was the cause of this shock. To begin with, there were separate entries for the bread and the butter and for the cup of coffee and the potatoes. They threw those things in free with every meat order at the Elite Restaurant back home; but it appeared that in New York they were charged for—and when he questioned the amount entered on account of the principal dish the waiter, producing the menu, which, in accordance with the metropolitan custom, he had previously taken away with him, directed Eddie's attention to the figures plainly printed there. Eddie saw his error then; all things considered, though, the mistake had been, on his part, a perfectly natural one. The "20" hadn't meant twenty cents at all; it had meant twenty minutes.

In spite of the prospects of mounting outlays it became necessary for him to take another taxicab in order to reach his next destination speedily. After listening to certain involved and bewildering statements by the uniformed official who warded the hotel entrance, he had a conviction that, going afoot, the trip would eat up hours of his time. And he was in a hurry to get where he was going. At least, so he was at the moment of starting.

But as the taxi took him on his way, criss-crossing in and out of streets which roared to the traffic in them, a grave doubt as to the wisdom and the advisability of his adventure began to assail Eddie. Considering it, he almost forgot to view the shifting sights or watch for the spasmodic bounding of the meter. That same doubt had been living in the back part of his mind since before he started for New York; his advent into the city and a sudden daunting realisation of the size of the city had quickened it into this present activity. He had not written to his sweetheart of his intent. He had jubilantly designed to take her by surprise. Just what was to follow on the heels of the surprise—what he would say and do, what he would propose, what he would suggest, he did not exactly know. At no time of his exciting thirty-hour journey had he known exactly. He had

been content to let the immediate future take care of its own contingencies; and now here he was in New York, bound for her studio and due there shortly, and still with no definite plan of campaign—practically with no valid excuse for having come at all. Question marks began to pass before him in a succession of heavy curlycues. What right had he, without invitation or encouragement, to bring his puny desires, his hopeless longings, his unimportant countrified self to her here in this place of her great endeavours and her greater aspirations? She would be busied in noble undertakings; engrossed inevitably in congenial and suitable companionships; and he—well, he was just plain inconsequential Eddie Sackett, forlorn and desperate from lovesickness. He was a fool and it was a fool's errand that had brought him and, for him, humiliation and regret must lie at the impending end of the journey. Maybe it would be better, all round, if he turned back——

The jolt of stopping jarred him to realities. The taxi had halted almost directly under some sort of trestled railway. As he stepped out, Eddie comprehended the surroundings. Dubiousness arising from a fresh cause—from a condition now and not from theories—assailed him. Was it possible that this neighbourhood actually bordered on Fifth Avenue? It wasn't possible, surely!

"Are you certain this—this is the right place?" he asked, making exact change to cover the amount of the fare as recorded. "Looks to me like we must have made a mistake."

"Same address wot you gimme," stated the driver. He flirted his thumb. "Dis is Sixth Avenoo and dere's your number." He derisively flipped the coins Eddie put in his hand; the absence of a tip annoyed him. He set his car in motion and went briskly away.

Right enough, the proper number was set above the door directly in front of him; but the door opened into a small cluttered cigar store. Within, behind a showcase, with his back half-turned to Eddie, was a dark, foreign-looking man. He swung a broad and sullen face about as Eddie hesitated on the threshold.

"Vell?" he inquired. His voice seemed to come rumbling from his lower abdomen.

"I'm looking for Miss Leatrice Ember," said Eddie, "in care of a Miss Harriet Devore."

"Mush Devo'?" With the least possible waste of physical energy the man motioned to the left. "Dwo vlights upt!"

"Which?—did you say two flights up?"

"Pshure!—don' you onderstan' Unglish? Oudside und upt der shteps. Ring der doorbell on her landink ven you get dere."

So Eddie, more mystified than ever, went outside and up the steps indicated—remarkably dirty steps they were—mounting a well of semi-darkness until he came to the second of a pair of long, narrow halls and to a door which faced him at the turn of the staircase. Set in the jamb of the doorway was a push-button. There was a card tacked to the woodwork alongside the button, but in that light he could not read what was written or printed on it. Something was wrong; this couldn't possibly be the place. He might be pretty ignorant of New York, but some things he knew intuitively. Still, since he had come this far he might as well go farther. On a venture he rang the bell.

Response was immediate. The door opened part way. A woman's shape showed rather dimly in the opening—Eddie was vaguely aware of the details of much and very bright hair and a vivid kimono—and a woman's voice challenged him with:

"Well, what?"

"I'm looking for a Miss Harriet Devore's house," stated Eddie; "but I guess maybe——"

"Quit guessin' then, you got your wish."

"Could I see her a minute?"

"You're seein' her now." She seemed unnecessarily short. "And part of your minute is gone already. Make it snappy, Waldo!"

"Was there—is there a young lady named Ember——"

"They was—and they is." She had such a disconcerting way of interrupting.

"Well, I just happened to be here in New York," said Eddie, his diffidence increasing, "and I just thought I'd drop in——"

The suddenness with which she moved caused him to break off his speech of explanation. With a jerk she had opened the door wider so that a better light from within, where the gas was turned on even though it still was mid-afternoon, shone past her on him. Her voice had sharpened, too:

" Say, are you by any chance from down yonder, wherever it is, that she come from ? " Seeing him now more distinctly, she answered herself : " Yes, of course you must be ! And, say, are you a friend of hers ? "

" Yes, I am."

" Good friend—know what I mean ?—old-time friend from the old home town and everything ? "

" Yes, of course."

" And still they's some'll say this religion stuff is the bunk ! " This speech was hardly a question ; it was an exclamation, rather.

" Which, ma'am ? I don't know as I get you. You see, I've known her pretty much all my life and I——"

" You have ? Then come on in here with me a minute."

She backed away and he followed her into what was plainly a room where the domestic side of living was consolidated with its social side, and she revealed to him a head of golden hair that was too good to be true—even Eddie could tell that—and a curiously pouched and mottled middle-age face.

With a puffy hand she closed the folds of her red robe at her throat and spoke rapidly.

" Say, listen. It's almost like as if you'd been sent—comin' to-day of all the days the whole year. Here all day long, ever in since this mornin', I've been wonderin' what they was for me to do. And then in you walk ! And you ast me does she live here ! And say you're a friend of hers ! "

" Is she sick? Has something happened ? "

" Something has mighty near happened. Say, listen. How long is it since you seen this kid ? "

" Not since the eighteenth day of last February, when she first started east," replied Eddie.

" And how long has it been since you heard from her—letter or message or something ? "

" June twenty-third was the last letter I got."

Seemingly without reason and all in one moment, the woman turned violent :

" Say, what the hell was you and all the rest of the people in that hick town thinkin' about anyway, leavin' her all alone here all this time ? Wasn't they nobody nowheres that'd have the interest in her to find out about her ? "

Eddie stiffened. In that same instant, too, he had found himself.

" She had me," he said stoutly. " She's got me now. Only, if anything serious has been the matter, I didn't know a word about it."

" You're goin' to know about it in a minute. It'd be better for me to tell it to you first—much as I know—and then maybe that'll sort of save her feelin's. Listen. She's been sick, all right, but it ain't nothin' that a doctor could cure her of. It's a different sort of medicine she's needin'."

" Where is she ? Let me——"

" Just a minute. Lemme give you the dope first. I reckon it's news to you, ain't it, to hear that she's been strictly up against it ? Well, she has, like many another like her is, in this man's town. She come here—let's see, it was back yonder along about the end of May it must 'a' been—and taken my small back room on this here same floor. I lease these here two top floors and rent them, furnished, by the week, get me ? I ain't payin' her any mind except to collect from her every Sat'day night. These here lodgers don't mean anything to me ; they come and go. I got my own worries, me doin' the best I can and just about gettin' by, what with some of these skates runnin' out on me every little while and bilkin' me out of my rent money and all. So all I notice about her is that she's quiet and ladylike and minds her own business, whatever it is. But here lately it seemed like she's been stickin' in her own room mighty close—well, that's all right, too. But this mornin' early I smelled gas 'scapin'—we burn gas here—and I traces it to her room and they she is, layin' in bed with the gas turned on full."

He seized her by her arms and shook her. He was altogether a new Eddie Sackett—masterful, white, tense, on edge to defend and to succour his womankind.

" She's all right ? It was an accident ? She's still here ? "

" She's all right, so far as that goes. And she's still here. But it wasn't no accident, Mister—Mister——"

" Sackett—Sackett's the name, damn it ! "

" Not no accident, Mister Sackett. She was fixin' to do a Dutch—get me ? She wasn't far gone, though—the gas hadn't had a good chance yet to get her. A little

fresh air and me workin' over her a spell and she comes right out of it. And then, bein' weak and all, she just breaks down and spills the whole works to me. Seems like she come up here from that comic town of yours with the trick name, aimin' to set New York on fire paintin' pictures. And right away she falls for some sort of a greasy faker that promises to set her in right, and he skins her out of the biggest part of her jack—her money, I should say. And then he turns cold on her and gives her the air. And she comes down here and hires a room off of me, figurin' maybe she can live cheap and get by for awhile doin' picture jobs for business houses or something. But the stuff she turns out is the limit and nobody don't want it—the poor kid! And what little money she's got left begins to run low on her. And she begins to get wise that she's been playin' a big game of pretend and it ain't got her nowheres—and never will, neither.

"With a girl like her in that fix, here in New York, they ain't but one of three ways out—she can go on the streets, or she can go back, licked, to the place where she come from, or she can bump herself off. And this kid was too decent to turn hustler—excuse me if I speak plain language, but that's the facts of it. And she was too proud to go back home and own up to everybody that knows her how she'd flopped. She just couldn't bear the thought of that, she told me; seemed like anything else was better than that. She can't bear the thought of 'em knowin' it, even now. So, what with her bein' so lonesome and down-and-out, and livin' for months on bum food and not any too much of that, and never gettin' nowheres, she just decided to turn on the gas. She tells me she'd heard that gas is one of the easiest ways of croakin' they is.

"What I guess I should 'a' done, findin' her that way, was call a cop and get an ambulance sent for and have her taken off to the hospital or the station house or somewheres. But I didn't have the heart to do it. So, instead of attendin' to my own business, I been settin' here wonderin' where she was goin' to head in and what I was goin' to do about her myself—and then this here bell rings and in you walks—the first, last and only person that ever come astin' for her all the time she's been here. I'll say it again—it's like as if you'd been sent as an answer!" Suddenly a note of doubtfulness came into Miss Devore's voice. "But say, listen. Think you can get her to go back home, Mister Sackett? She's still dead set that her home folks ain't never to know the truth about how she failed—says she'll die first, before she'll tell 'em. If she goes, you'll have to cover up for her, some way."

"Think I can get her to go? Huh, I'm going to take her! She's good enough for that town or any town. She's too good for this damn town!"

"Boy, listen. You and me live more'n a thousand miles apart, I guess, and our ways of thinkin' may be even further apart than that. But when you talk like that I got to hand it to you for bein' an all-right guy. But—but what'll she do when she gets home—without money and no way to earn her own livin' and not no kinsfolks to fall back on neither, from what she tells me. That's something for you and her both to think about."

"What does she need with money?" The manner of the protector and the provider was competently his.

"I've got the money. I reckon I can make a living for two. My wife won't have to work."

"Your wife?"

"Certainly! We're going to be married—married right here in your house, if you'll let us."

"If I'll let you? Say, listen, man, I'll give the bride away."

"Then let's go tell her!"

"Tell her what?"

"Tell her she's going to be married, soon as the minister and the license can get here."

"Say, for a guy from a rube town you're swift, ain't you? When I first saw you five minutes ago I didn't think it was in you, honest I didn't. How long have you two been engaged, anyhow? She never mentioned bein' engaged when she was spillin' all her troubles out to me this mornin'."

"A long time," said Eddie; "only she didn't know it. But I knew it all along. And say, Miss Devore, there's a reason why I'm specially glad you're going to let us get married here."

He half-shut his eyes, the journalist, shaping in his mind the introductory sentence of the telegram he would send that night for publication in the ensuing issue of the *Dentondale Weekly Sun-Independent:*

" Wedded : At the studio apartment of the bride, in Greater New York City, one block from Fifth Avenue, Whippoorwillville's most gifted daughter, and more lately one of Gotham's rising and successful young artists, Miss Leatrice Ember, to ye proud and happy scribe——"

He snapped back to roseate earth again.

" Well, what are we waiting for, Miss Devore ? Let's go tell her."

The woman led the way for him out into the hall and down the hall to its darker and deeper end and there swung open a door for him to enter by. As the girl on the cot-bed sat up and cried her joy at sight of him who crossed the threshold to take her in his arms, Miss Devore, turning her head, uttered, aside and to herself, what was at once a defiance, a boast, a triumphant pronouncement and, yes—by the blowsy Miss Devore's curious standards —a prayer :

" And still they's some'll say they ain't no God ! "

(Another Great Love Story will appear in next Month's " Argosy.")

POETRY AND THE POET

[A SONNET]

(Found on the Poet's desk)

WEARY, I open wide the antique pane
I ope to the air
I ope to
I open to the air the antique pane
And gaze {beyond ?} the thrift-sown field of wheat, [commonplace ?]
{across}
A-shimmering green in breezes born of heat ;
And lo !
And high
And my soul's eyes behold {a ?} billowy main
{the}
Whose farther shore is Greece

strain
again
vain

[*Arcadia*—mythological allusion.—Mem. : *Lemprière.*]

I see thee, Atalanta, vestal fleet,
And look ! with doves low-fluttering round her feet,
Comes Venus through the golden {fields of ?} grain.
{bowing}

(Heard by the Poet's neighbour.)

Venus be bothered—it's Virginia Dix !

(Found on the Poet's door.)

Out on important business—back at 6.

H. C. BUNNER

The Absence of Mr. Glass

Father Brown solves the mystery of the retiring lodger

By G. K. CHESTERTON

THE consulting rooms of Dr. Orion Hood, the eminent criminologist and specialist in certain moral disorders, lay along the sea-front at Scarborough, in a series of very large and well-lighted French windows, which showed the North Sea like one endless outer wall of blue-green marble. In such a place the sea had something of the monotony of a blue-green dado; for the chambers themselves were ruled throughout by a terrible tidiness not unlike the terrible tidiness of the sea. It must not be supposed that Dr. Hood's apartments excluded luxury, or even poetry. These things were there, in their place; but one felt that they were never allowed out of their place. Luxury was there: there stood upon a special table eight or ten boxes of the best cigars; but they were built upon a plan so that the strongest were always nearest the wall and the mildest nearest the window. A tantalus containing three kinds of spirit, all of a liqueur excellence, stood always on this table of luxury; but the fanciful have asserted that the whisky, brandy, and rum seemed always to stand at the same level.

Poetry was there: the left-hand corner of the room was lined with as complete a set of English classics as the right hand could show of English and foreign physiologists. But if one took a volume of Chaucer or Shelley from that rank, its absence irritated the mind like a gap in a man's front teeth. One could not say the books were never read; probably they were, but there was a sense of their being chained to their places, like the Bibles in the old churches. Dr. Hood treated his private bookshelf as if it were a public library. And if this strict scientific intangibility steeped even the shelves laden with lyrics and ballads and the tables laden with drink and tobacco, it goes without saying that yet more of such heathen holiness protected the other shelves that held the specialist's library, and the other tables that sustained the frail and even fairylike instruments of chemistry or mechanics.

Dr. Orion Hood paced the length of his string of apartments, bounded—as the boys' geographies say—on the east by the North Sea and on the west by the serried ranks of his sociological and criminologist library. He was clad in an artist's velvet, but with none of an artist's negligence; his hair was heavily shot with grey, but growing thick and healthy; his face was lean, but sanguine and expectant. Everything about him and his room indicated something at once rigid and restless, like that great Northern Sea by which (on pure principles of hygiene) he had built his home.

Fate, being in a funny mood, pushed the door open and introduced into those long, strict, sea-flanked apartments one who was perhaps the most startling opposite of them and their master. In answer to a curt but civil summons, the door opened inwards and there shambled into the room a shapeless little figure, which seemed to find its own hat and umbrella as unmanageable as a mass of luggage. The umbrella was a black and prosaic bundle long past repair, the hat was a broad, curved black hat, clerical but not common in England, the man was the very embodiment of all that is homely and helpless.

The doctor regarded the new-comer with a restrained astonishment, not unlike that he would have shown if some huge but obviously harmless sea-beast had crawled into his room. The new-comer regarded the doctor with that beaming but breathless geniality which characterises a corpulent charwoman who has just managed to stuff herself into an omnibus. It is a rich confusion of social self-congratulation and bodily disarray. His hat tumbled to the carpet, his heavy umbrella slipped between his knees with a thud; he reached after the one and ducked after the other, but with an unimpaired smile on his round face spoke simultaneously as follows:

"My name is Brown. Pray excuse me. I come about that business of the MacNabs. I have heard you often help people out of such troubles. Pray excuse me if I am wrong."

By this time he had sprawlingly recovered the hat, and made an odd little bobbing bow over it, as if setting everything quite right.

"I hardly understand you," replied the scientist, with a cold intensity of manner. "I fear you have mistaken the chambers. I am Dr. Hood, and my work is almost entirely literary and educational. It is true that I have sometimes been consulted by the police in cases of peculiar difficulty and importance, but——"

"Oh, this is of the greatest importance," broke in the little man called Brown. "Why, her mother won't let them get engaged." And he leaned back in his chair in radiant rationality.

The brows of Dr. Hood were drawn down darkly, but the eyes under them were bright with something that might be anger or might be amusement. "And still," he said, "I do not quite understand."

"You see, they want to get married," said the man with the clerical hat. "Maggie MacNab and young Todhunter want to get *married*. Now, what can be more important than that?"

¶

THE great Orion Hood's scientific triumphs had deprived him of many things —some said of his health, others of his God; but they had not wholly despoiled him of his sense of the absurd. At the last plea of the ingenuous priest a chuckle broke out of him from inside and he threw himself into an armchair in an ironical attitude of the consulting physician.

"Mr. Brown," he said gravely, "it is quite fourteen and a half years since I was personally asked to test a personal problem: then it was the case of an attempt to poison the French President at a Lord Mayor's Banquet. It is now, I understand, a question of whether some friend of yours called Maggie is a suitable fiancée for some friend of hers called Todhunter. Well, Mr. Brown, I am a sportsman. I will take it on. I will give the MacNab family my best advice, as good as I gave the French Republic and the King of England—no, better: fourteen years better. I have nothing else to do this afternoon. Tell me your story."

The little clergyman called Brown thanked him with unquestionable warmth, but still with a queer kind of simplicity. It was rather as if he were thanking a stranger in a smoking-room for some trouble in passing the matches, than as if he were (as he was) practically thanking the Curator of Kew Gardens for coming with him into a field, to find a four-leaved clover. With scarcely a semicolon after his hearty thanks, the little man began his recital:

"I told you my name was Brown; well, that's the fact, and I'm the priest of the little Catholic Church I dare say you've seen beyond those straggly streets, where the town ends towards the north. In the last and straggliest of those streets which runs along the sea like a sea-wall there is a very honest but rather sharp-tempered member of my flock, a widow called MacNab. She has one daughter, and she lets lodgings; and between her and the daughter, and between her and the lodgers —well, I dare say there is a great deal to be said on both sides. At present she has only one lodger, the young man called Todhunter; but he has given more trouble than all the rest, for he wants to marry the young woman of the house."

"And the young woman of the house," asked Dr. Hood, with huge and silent amusement, "what does she want?"

"Why, she wants to marry him," cried Father Brown, sitting up eagerly. "That is just the awful complication."

"It is indeed a hideous enigma," said Dr. Hood

"This young James Todhunter," continued the cleric, "is a very decent man so far as I know; but then nobody knows very much. He is a bright, brownish little fellow, agile like a monkey, clean-shaven like an actor, and obliging like a born courier. He seems to have quite a pocketful of money, but nobody knows what his trade is. Mrs. MacNab, therefore (being of a pessimistic turn), is quite sure it is something dreadful, and probably connected with dynamite. The dynamite must be of a shy and noiseless sort, for the poor fellow only shuts himself up for several hours of the day and studies something behind a locked door. He declares his privacy is temporary and justified, and promises to explain before the wedding. That is all that anyone knows for certain, but Mrs.

MacNab will tell you a great deal more than even she is certain of. You know how the tales grow like grass on such a patch of ignorance as that. There are tales of two voices heard talking in the room; though, when the door is opened, Todhunter is always found alone. There are tales of a mysterious tall man in a silk hat, who once came out of the sea-mists and apparently out of the sea, stepping softly across the sandy fields and through the small back garden at twilight, till he was heard talking to the lodger at his open back window. The colloquy seemed to end in a quarrel: Todhunter dashed down his window with violence, and the man in the high hat melted into the sea-fog again. This story is told by the family with the fiercest mystification, but I really think Mrs. MacNab prefers her own original tale: that the Other Man (or whatever it is) crawls out every night from the big box in the corner, which is kept locked all day. You see, therefore, how this sealed door of Todhunter's is treated as the gate of all the fancies and monstrosities of the *Thousand and One Nights*. And yet there is the little fellow in his respectable black jacket, as punctual and innocent as a parlour clock. He pays his rent to the tick; he is practically a teetotaller; he is tirelessly kind with the younger children, and can keep them amused for a day on end; and, last and most urgent of all, he has made himself equally popular with the eldest daughter, who is ready to go to church with him to-morrow."

A man warmly concerned with any large theories has always a relish for applying them to any triviality. The great specialist, having condescended to the priest's simplicity, condescended expansively. He settled himself with comfort in his armchair and began to talk in the tone of a somewhat absent-minded lecturer:

"Even in a minute instance, it is best to look first to the main tendencies of Nature. A particular flower may not be dead in early winter, but the flowers are dying; a particular pebble may never be wetted with the tide, but the tide is coming in. To the scientific eye all human history is a series of collective movements, destructions or migrations, like the massacre of flies in winter or the return of birds in spring. Now the root fact in all history is Race. Race produces religion; Race produces legal and ethical wars. There is no stronger case than that of the wild, unworldly and perishing stock which we commonly call the Celts, of whom your friends the MacNabs are specimens. Small, swarthy, and of this dreamy and drifting blood, they accept easily the superstitious explanation of any incidents, just as they still accept (you will excuse me for saying) that superstitious explanation of all incidents which you and your Church represent. It is not remarkable that such people, with the sea moaning behind them and the Church (excuse me again) droning in front of them, should put fantastic features into what are probably plain events. You, with your small parochial responsibilities, see only this particular Mrs. MacNab, terrified with this particular tale of two voices and a tall man out of the sea. But the man with the scientific imagination, as it were, the whole clan of MacNabs scattered over the whole world, in its ultimate average as uniform as a tribe of birds. He sees thousands of Mrs. MacNabs, in thousands of houses, dropping their little drop of morbidity in the tea-cups of their friends; he sees——"

Before the scientist could conclude his sentence, another and more impatient summons sounded from without; someone with swishing skirts was marshalled hurriedly down the corridor, and the door opened on a young girl, decently dressed but disordered and red-hot with haste. She had sea-blown blonde hair, and would have been entirely beautiful if her cheek-bones had not been, in the Scotch manner, a little high in relief as well as in colour. Her apology was almost as abrupt as a command.

"I'm sorry to interrupt you, sir," she said; "but I had to follow Father Brown at once; it's nothing less than life or death."

Father Brown began to get to his feet in some disorder. "Why, what has happened, Maggie?" he said.

"James has been murdered, for all I can make out," answered the girl, still breathing hard from her rush. "That man Glass has been with him again; I heard them talking through the door quite plain. Two separate voices; for James speaks low, with a burr, and the other voice was high and quavery."

"That man Glass?" repeated the priest in some perplexity.

"I know his name is Glass," answered the girl, in great impatience. "I heard it through the door. They were quarrelling—

about money, I think—for I heard James say again and again, 'That's right, Mr. Glass,' or 'No, Mr. Glass,' and then, 'Two and three, Mr. Glass.' But we're talking too much; you must come at once, and there may be time yet."

"But time for what?" asked Dr. Hood, who had been studying the young lady with marked interest. "What is there about Mr. Glass and his money troubles that should impel such urgency?"

"I tried to break down the door and couldn't," answered the girl shortly. "Then I ran round to the back-yard, and managed to climb on to the window-sill that looks into the room. It was all dim, and seemed to be empty, but I swear I saw James lying huddled up in a corner, as if he were drugged or strangled."

"This is very serious," said Father Brown, gathering his errant hat and umbrella and standing up; "in point of fact, I was just putting your case before this gentleman, and his view——"

"Has been largely altered," said the scientist gravely. "I do not think this young lady is so Celtic as I had supposed. As I have nothing else to do, I will put on my hat and stroll down the town with you."

In a few minutes all three were approaching the dreary tail of the MacNabs' street; the girl with the stern and breathless stride of the mountaineer, the criminologist with a lounging grace (which was not without a certain leopard-like swiftness), and the priest at an energetic trot entirely devoid of distinction. The aspect of this edge of the town was not entirely without justification for the doctor's hints about desolate moods and environments. The scattered houses stood farther and farther apart in a broken string along the seashore, the afternoon was closing with a premature and partly lurid twilight; the sea was of an inky purple and murmuring ominously. In the scrappy back garden of the MacNabs which ran down towards the sand, two black, barren-looking trees stood up like demon hands held up in astonishment, and as Mrs. MacNab ran down the street to meet them with lean hands similarly spread, and her fierce face in shadow, she was a little like a demon herself. The doctor and the priest made scant reply to her shrill reiterations of her daughter's story, with more disturbing details of her own, to the divided vows of vengeance against Mr. Glass for murdering, and against Mr. Todhunter for being murdered, or against the latter for having dared to want to marry her daughter, and for not having lived to do it. They passed through the narrow passages in the front of the house until they came to the lodger's door at the back, and there Dr. Hood, with the trick of an old detective, put his shoulder sharply to the panel and burst in the door.

It opened on a scene of silent catastrophe. No one seeing it, even for a flash, could doubt that the room had been the theatre of some thrilling collision between two, or perhaps more, persons. Playing-cards lay littered across the table or fluttered about the floor as if a game had been interrupted. Two wine-glasses stood ready for wine on a side-table, but a third lay smashed in a star of crystal upon the carpet. A few feet from it lay what looked like a long knife or short sword, straight, but with an ornamental and pictured handle; its dull blade just caught a grey glint from the dreary window behind, which showed the black trees against the leaden level of the sea. Towards the opposite corner of the room was rolled a gentleman's silk top hat, as if it had just been knocked off his head; so much so, indeed, that one almost looked to see it still rolling. And in the corner behind it, thrown like a sack of potatoes, but corded like a railway trunk, lay Mr. James Todhunter, with a scarf across his mouth, and six or seven ropes knotted round his elbows and ankles. His brown eyes were alive and shifted alertly.

¶

DR. ORION HOOD paused for one instant on the doormat and drank in the whole scene of voiceless violence. Then he stepped swiftly across the carpet, picked up the tall silk hat, and gravely put it upon the head of the yet pinioned Todhunter. It was so much too large for him that it almost slipped down on his shoulders.

"Mr. Glass's hat," said the doctor, returning with it and peering into the inside with a pocket lens. "How to explain the absence of Mr. Glass and the presence of Mr. Glass's hat! For Mr. Glass is not a careless man with his clothes. This hat is of a stylish shape and systematically brushed and burnished, though not very new. An old dandy, I should think."

"But, good heavens!" called out Miss

MacNab, " aren't you going to untie the man first ? "

" I say ' old ' with intention, though not with certainty," continued the expositor, " my reason for it might seem a little far-fetched. The hair of human beings falls out in varying degrees, but almost always falls out slightly, and with the lens I should see the tiny hairs in a hat recently worn. It has none, which leads me to guess that Mr. Glass is bald. Now when this is taken with the high-pitched and querulous voice which Miss MacNab described so vividly (patience, my dear lady, patience), when we take the hairless head together with the tone common in senile anger, I should think we may deduce some advance in years. Nevertheless, he was probably vigorous, and he was almost certainly tall. I might rely in same degree on the story of his previous appearance at the window, as a tall man in a silk hat, but I think I have more exact indication. This wine-glass has been smashed all over the place, but one of its splinters lies on the high bracket beside the mantelpiece. No such fragment could have fallen there if the vessel had been smashed in the hand of a comparatively short man like Mr. Todhunter."

" By the way," said Father Brown, " might it not be as well to untie Mr. Todhunter ? "

" Our lesson from the drinking vessels does not end here," proceeded the specialist. " I may say at once that it is possible that the man Glass was bald or nervous through dissipation rather than age. Mr. Todhunter, as has been remarked, is a quiet, thrifty gentleman, essentially an abstainer. These cards and wine-cups are no part of his normal habit ; they have been produced for a particular companion. But, as it happens, we may go farther. Mr. Todhunter may or may not possess this wine service, but there is no appearance of his possessing any wine. What, then, were these vessels to contain ? I would at once suggest some brandy or whisky, perhaps of a luxurious sort, from a flask in the pocket of Mr. Glass. We have thus something like a picture of the man, or at least of the type ; tall, elderly, fashionable, but somewhat frayed, certainly fond of play and strong waters, and perhaps rather too fond of them. Mr. Glass is a gentleman not unknown on the fringes of society."

" Look here," cried the young woman, " if you don't let me pass to untie him I'll run outside and scream for the police."

" I should not advise *you*, Miss MacNab,' said Dr. Hood gravely, " to be in any hurry to fetch the police. Father Brown, I seriously ask you to compose your flock, for their sakes, not for mine. Well, we have seen something of the figure and quality of Mr. Glass ; what are the chief facts known of Mr. Todhunter ? They are substantially three : that he is economical, that he is more or less wealthy, and that he has a secret. Now surely it is obvious that there are the three chief marks of the kind man who is blackmailed. And surely it is equally obvious that the faded finery, the profligate habits and the shrill irritation of Mr. Glass are the unmistakable marks of the kind of man who blackmails him. We have the two typical figures of a tragedy of hush money ; on the one hand, the respectable man with a mystery, on the other, the West-end vulture with a scent for a mystery. These two men have met here to-day and have quarrelled, using blows and a bare weapon."

" Are you going to take those ropes off ? " asked the girl stubbornly.

Dr. Hood replaced the silk hat carefully on the side table, and went across to the captive. He studied him intently, even moving him a little and half-turning him round by the shoulders, but he only answered :

" No, I think these ropes will do very well till your friends the police bring the handcuffs."

¶

FATHER BROWN, who had been looking dully at the carpet, lifted his round face and said, " What do you mean ? "

The man of science had picked up the peculiar dagger-sword from the carpet and was examining it intently as he answered :

" Because you find Mr. Todhunter tied up," he said, " you all jump to the conclusion that Mr. Glass had tied him up ; and then, I suppose, escaped. There are four objections to this. First, why should a gentleman so dressy as our friend Glass leave his hat behind him, if he left of his own free will ? Second," he continued, moving towards the window, " this is the only exit, and it is locked on the inside. Third, this blade here has a tiny touch of blood at the point, but there is no wound on Mr. Todhunter. Mr. Glass

took that wound away with him, dead or alive. Add to all this primary probability. It is much more likely that the blackmailed person would try to kill his incubus, rather than that the blackmailer would try to kill the goose that lays his golden eggs. There, I think, we have a pretty complete story."

"But the ropes?' inquired the priest, whose eyes had remained open with a rather vacant admiration.

"Ah, the ropes," said the expert with a singular intonation. "Miss MacNab very much wanted to know why I did not set Mr. Todhunter free from his ropes. Well, I will tell her. I did not do it because Mr. Todhunter can set himself free from them at any minute he chooses."

"What?" cried the audience on quite different notes of astonishment.

"I have looked at all the knots on Mr. Todhunter," reiterated Hood quietly. "I happen to know something about knots; they are quite a branch of criminal science. Every one of those knots he has made himself and could loosen himself; not one of them would have been made by an enemy really trying to pinion him. The whole of this affair of the ropes is a clever fake to make us think him the victim of the struggle instead of the wretched Glass, whose corpse may be hidden in the garden or stuffed up the chimney.'

There was a rather depressed silence; the room was darkening, the sea-blighted boughs of the garden trees looked leaner and blacker than ever, yet they seemed to have come nearer to the window.

One could almost fancy they were sea-monsters like crakens or cuttlefish, writhing polypi who had crawled up from the sea to see the end of this tragedy, even as *he*, the villain and victim of it, the terrible man in the tall hat, had once crawled up from the sea. For the whole air was dense with the morbidity of blackmail. which is the most morbid of human things, because it is a crime concealing a crime; a black plaster on a blacker wound.

The face of the little Catholic priest, which was commonly complacent and even comic, had suddenly become knotted with a curious frown. It was not the blank curiosity of his first innocence. It was rather that creative curiosity which comes when a man has the beginnings of an idea. "Say it again, please," he said in a simple, bothered manner· "do you mean that Todhunter can tie himself up all alone and untie himself all alone?"

"That is what I mean," said the doctor.

"Jerusalem!" ejaculated Brown suddenly, "I wonder if it could possibly be that!"

He scuttled across the room rather like a rabbit, and peered with quite a new impulsiveness into the partially covered face of the captive. Then he turned his own rather fatuous face to the company. "Yes, that's it!" he cried in a certain excitement. "Can't you see it in the man's face? Why, look at his eyes!"

Both the Professor and the girl followed the direction of his glance. And though the broad black scarf completely masked the lower half of Todhunter's visage, they did grow conscious of something struggling and intense about the upper part of it.

"His eyes do look queer," cried the young woman, strongly moved. "You brutes; I believe it's hurting him!"

"Not that, I think," said Dr. Hood, "the eyes have certainly a singular expression. But I should interpret those transverse wrinkles as expressing rather such slight psychological abnormality——"

"Oh, bosh!" cried Father Brown, "can't you see he's laughing?"

"Laughing!" repeated the doctor, with a start, "but what on earth can he be laughing at?"

"Well," replied the Reverend Brown apologetically, "not to put too fine a point on it, I think he is laughing at you. And indeed, I'm a little inclined to laugh at myself, now I know about it."

"Now you know about what?" asked Hood, in some exasperation.

"Now I know," replied the priest "the profession of Mr. Todhunter."

He shuffled about the room looking at one object after another, with what seemed to be a vacant stare, and then invariably bursting into an equally vacant laugh, a highly irritating process for those who had to watch it. He laughed very much over the hat, still more uproariously over the broken glass, but the blood on the sword-point sent him into mortal convulsions of amusement. Then he turned to the fuming specialist.

"Dr. Hood," he cried enthusiastically, "you are a great poet! You have called an uncreated being out of the void. How much more godlike that is than if you had only ferreted out the mere facts! Indeed,

the mere facts are rather commonplace and comic by comparison."

"I have no notion what you are talking about," said Dr. Hood rather haughtily; "my facts are all inevitable, though necessarily incomplete. A place may be permitted to intuition, perhaps (or poetry if you prefer the term), but only because the corresponding details cannot as yet be ascertained. In the absence of Mr. Glass ——"

"That's it, that's it," said the little priest, nodding quite eagerly, "that's the first idea to get fixed; the absence of Mr. Glass. He is so extremely absent, I suppose," he added reflectively, "that there was never anybody so absent as Mr. Glass."

"Do you mean he is absent from the town?" demanded the doctor.

"I mean he is absent from everywhere," answered Father Brown; "he is absent from the Nature of Things, so to speak."

"Do you seriously mean," said the specialist with a smile, "that there is no such person?"

The priest made a sign of assent. "It does seem a pity," he said.

Orion Hood broke into a contemptuous laugh. "Well," he said, "before we go on to the hundred and one other evidences, let us take the first proof we found; the first fact we fell over when we fell into this room. If there is no Mr. Glass, whose hat is this?"

"It is Mr. Todhunter's," replied Brown.

"But it doesn't fit him," cried Hood impatiently. "He couldn't possibly wear it!"

Father Brown shook his head with ineffable mildness. "I never said he could wear it," he answered. "I said it was his hat. Or, if you insist on a shade of difference a hat that is his."

"And where is the shade of difference?" asked the criminologist with a slight sneer.

"My good sir," cried the mild little man, with his first movement akin to impatience, "if you will walk down the street to the nearest hatter's shop, you will see that there is, in common speech, a difference between a man's hat and the hats that are his."

"But a hatter," protested Hood, "can get money out of his stock of new hats. What could Todhunter get out of his one old hat?"

"Rabbits," replied Father Brown promptly.

"*What?*" cried Dr. Hood.

"Rabbits, ribbons, sweetmeats, goldfish, rolls of coloured paper," said the reverend gentleman with rapidity. "Didn't you see it all when you found out the faked ropes? It's just the same with the sword. Mr. Todhunter hasn't got a scratch on him, as you say; but he's got a scratch in him, if you follow me."

"Do you mean inside Mr. Todhunter's clothes?" inquired Mrs. MacNab sternly.

"I do not mean inside Mr. Todhunter's clothes," said Father Brown. "I mean inside Mr. Todhunter."

"Well, what in the name of Bedlam *do* you mean?"

¶

"MR. TODHUNTER," explained Father Brown placidly, "is learning to be a professional conjurer, as well as juggler, ventriloquist, and expert in the rope trick. The conjuring explains the hat. It is without traces of hair, not because it is worn by the prematurely bald Mr. Glass, but because it has never been worn by anybody. The juggling explains the three glasses, which Todhunter was teaching himself to throw up and catch in rotation. But, being only at the stage of practice, he smashed one glass against the ceiling. And the juggling also explains the sword, which it was Mr. Todhunter's professional pride and duty to swallow. But, again, being at the stage of practice, he very slightly grazed the inside of his throat with the weapon. Hence he has a wound inside him, which I am sure (from the expression of his face) is not a serious one. He was also practising the trick of a release from ropes, like the Davenport Brothers, and he was just about to free himself when we all burst into the room. The cards, of course, are for card tricks, and they are scattered on the floor because he had just been practising one of those dodges of sending them flying through the air. He merely kept his trade secret, because he had to keep his tricks secret, like any other conjurer. But the mere fact of an idler in a top hat having once looked in at his back window, and been driven away by him with great indignation, was enough to set us all on a wrong track of romance, and make us imagine his whole life was overshadowed by the silk-hatted spectre of Mr. Glass."

"But what about the two voices?" asked Maggie, staring.

" Have you never heard a ventriloquist ? " asked Father Brown. " Don't you know they speak first in their natural voice, and then answer themselves in just that shrill, squeaky, unnatural voice that you heard ? "

There was a long silence, and Dr. Hood regarded the little man who had spoken with a dark and attentive smile. " You are certainly a very ingenious person," he said ; " it could not have been done better in a book. But there is just one part of Mr. Glass you have not succeeded in explaining away, and that is his name. Miss MacNab distinctly heard him so addressed by Mr. Todhunter."

The Rev. Mr. Brown broke into a rather childish giggle. " Well, that," he said, " that's the silliest part of the whole silly story. When our juggling friend here threw up the three glasses in turn, he counted them aloud as he caught them, and also commented aloud when he failed to catch them. What he really said was ' One, two and three—missed a glass ; one, two—missed a glass.' And so on."

There was a second of stillness in the room, and then everyone with one accord burst out laughing. As they did so the figure in the corner complacently uncoiled all the ropes and let them fall with a flourish. Then, advancing into the middle of the room with a bow, he produced from his pocket a big bill printed in blue and red, which announced that ZALADIN, the World's Greatest Conjurer, Contortionist, Ventriloquist and Human Kangaroo would be ready with an entirely new series of Tricks at the Empire Pavilion, Scarborough, on Monday next at eight o'clock precisely.

The Wheel of Fortune

SPEEDY execution is the mother of good fortune. PROVERB.

FORTUNE makes a fool of the man whom she favours over much. PUBLIUS SYRUS.

IF you count up the sunny and cloudy days in a complete year, you will find that the fine day has come more often. OVID.

WHEN we do not act, the gods abandon us. VOLTAIRE.

IT seems to me harder to find a man who bears good fortune well, than one who bears evil. XENOPHON.

FORTUNE gives too much to many, enough to none. MARTIAL.

HAPPINESS or misery generally go to those who have the most of either the one or the other. LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

FORTUNE can take from us nothing but what she gave. PROVERB.

IF fortune would make a man estimable, she gives him virtues ; if she would have him esteemed, she gives him success. JOUBERT.

EACH man has his fortune in his own hands, as the artist has a piece of rude matter, which he is to fashion into a certain shape. GOETHE.

FORTUNE does not change men ; it only unmasks them. MME RICCOBONI.

The Romance of the Wheel

My Lady's Coach.

WHEN I was in France, I used to gaze with great astonishment at the splendid equipages, and party-coloured habits of that fantastic nation. I was one day in particular contemplating a lady that sat in a coach adorned with gilded Cupids and finely painted with the Loves of Venus and Adonis. The coach was drawn by six milk-white horses, and loaded behind with the same number of powdered footmen. Just before the lady were a couple of beautiful pages, that were stuck among the harness, and by their gay dresses and smiling features, looked like the elder brothers of the little boys that were carved and painted in every corner of the coach.

The lady was the unfortunate Cleanthe, who afterwards gave an occasion to a pretty melancholy novel. She had, for several years, received the addresses of a gentleman, whom, after a long and intimate acquaintance, she forsook, upon the account of this shining equipage, which had been offered to her by one of great riches, but a crazy constitution. The circumstances in which I saw her, were, it seems, the disguise only of a broken heart, and a kind of pageantry to cover distress, for in two months after she was carried to her grave with the same pomp and magnificence, being sent thither partly by the loss of one lover, and partly by the possession of another.

JOSEPH ADDISON.

A Fantastic Turn-Out.

PERCHED high in mid-air, upon some mysterious species of dog-cart, bearing a striking resemblance to the box of a mail-coach, which had contrived, by some private theory of development of its own, to dispense with its body, while it had enlarged its wheels to an almost incredible circumference; perched on the top of this remarkable machine, and enveloped in a white greatcoat undermined in every direction by strange and unexpected pockets, was none other than the Honourable George Lawless! The turn-out was drawn by a pair of thoroughbreds, driven tandem, which were now (their irascible tempers being disturbed by the delay which my usurpation of the road had occasioned) relieving their feelings by executing a kind of hornpipe upon their hind legs. The equipage was completed by a tiger, so small, that beyond a vague sensation of top-boots and a livery hat, one's senses failed to realise him.

FRANK SMEDLEY.

The Old Brighton Fly.

FOR a small charge you may hire a fly, with a postillion, in a pink striped chintz jacket—which may have been the cover of an arm-chair once—and straight, whitey-brown hair, and little wash-leather inexpressibles—the cheapest little caricature of a post-boy eyes have ever lighted on.

I seldom used to select his carriage, for the horse and vehicle looked feeble, and unequal to bearing a person of weight; but last Sunday I saw an Israelitish family of distinction ensconced in the poor little carriage—the ladies with the most flaming polkas, and flounces all the way up; the gent in velvet waistcoat, with pins in his breast big enough once to have surmounted the door of his native pawnbroker's shop, and a complement of hook-nosed children, magnificent in attire. Their number and magnificence did not break the carriage down; the little postillion bumped up and down as usual, as the old horse went his usual pace. How they spread out, and basked, and shone, and were happy in the sun there.

W. M. THACKERAY.

In an Eighteenth Century Phaeton.

WE continued in the garden till the phaeton was ready . . . Lord Orville drove very slow, and so cautiously, that, not withstanding the height of the phaeton, fear would have been ridiculous. I supported no part in the conversation, but Mrs. Selwyn extremely well supplied the place of two. Lord Orville himself did not speak much, but the excellent sense and refined good-breeding which accompany every word he utters, give value and weight to whatever he says.

" I suppose, my Lord," said Mrs. Selwyn, when we stopped at our lodgings, " you would have been extremely confused had we met any gentlemen who have the honour of knowing you ? "

" If I had," answered he, gallantly, " it would have been from mere compassion at their envy."

" No, my Lord," answered she, " it would have been from mere shame, that, in an age so daring, you alone should be such a coward as to forbear to frighten women."

" O," cried he, laughing, " when a man is in a fright for himself, the ladies cannot but be in security ; for you have not had half the apprehension for the safety of your persons, that I have for that of my heart." He then alighted, handed us out, took leave, and, again mounting the phaeton, was out of sight in a minute. Frances Burney.

A Courteous Coachman.

IF I should tell you that I have seen a hackney-coachman, when he has come to set down his fare, which has consisted of two or three very fine ladies, hand them out, and salute every one of them with an air of familiarity, without giving the least offence, you would perhaps think me guilty of a gasconade. Sir Richard Steele.

The Dashing High Flier.

IT is not above twenty or thirty years, according to the evidence of many credible witnesses now alive, since a little miserable horse-cart, performing with difficulty a journey of thirty miles *per diem*, carried our mails from the capital of Scotland to its extremity. Nor was Scotland much more deficient in these accommodations, than our richer sister had been about eighty years before. . . .

But in both countries these ancient, slow, and sure modes of conveyance, are now alike unknown ; mail-coach races against mail-coach, and high-flyer against high-flyer, through the most remote districts of Britain. And in our village alone, three post-coaches, and four coaches with men armed and in scarlet cassocks, thunder through the streets each day, and rival in brilliancy and noise the invention of the celebrated tyrant.

Now and then, to complete the resemblance, and to correct the presumption of the venturous charioteers, it does happen that the career of these dashing rivals of Salmoneus meets with as undesirable and violent a termination as that of their prototype. It is on such occasions that the Insides and Outsides, to use the appropriate vehicular phrases, have reason to rue the exchange of the slow and safe motion of the ancient fly-coaches, which, compared with the chariots of Mr. Palmer, so ill-deserve the name. The ancient vehicle used to settle quietly down, like a ship scuttled and left to sink by the gradual influx of the waters, while the modern is smashed to pieces with the velocity of the same vessel hurled against breakers, or rather with the fury of a bomb bursting at the conclusion of its career through the air. Sir Walter Scott.

A Memory of the Old Horse Bus.

THERE flashed upon me the old London that used to amble along on four legs, the London before the Deluge, the London before the coming of King Petrol, when the hansom was the jaunty aristocrat of the streets, and the two-horse bus was the chariot of democracy. London was a slow place then, of course, and a journey say, from Dollis Hill to Dulwich, was a formidable adventure, but it was very human and humorous. When you took your seat behind, or better still, beside the rosy-cheeked bus-driver, you settled down to a really good time. The world was in no hurry and the bus-driver was excellent company. He would tell you about the sins of that " orf horse," the idiosyncracies of passengers, the artifices of the police, the mysteries of the stable. He would shout some abstruse joke to a passing driver, and with a hard wink include you in the revelry. The conductor would stroll up to him and continue a conversation that had begun early in the morning and seemed to go on intermittently all day—a conversation of that jolly sort in which, as Washington Irving says, the jokes are rather small and the laughter abundant.

In those happy days, of course, women knew their place. It was inside the bus. The outside was consecrated to that superior animal, Man. It was an act of courage, almost of impropriety, for a woman to ride on the top alone. Anything might happen to her in those giddy, moral altitudes.

A. G. Gardiner.

An Early Railroad Problem.

WHEN George Stephenson was examined before a Parliamentary Committee with reference to his new locomotive, one member of the Committee pressed him with many questions, and at length put the following case : " Suppose, now, one of those engines to be going along a railroad at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour, and that a cow were to stray upon the line and get in the way of the engine ; would not that, think you, be a very awkward circumstance ? "

" Yes," replied Stephenson, with a twinkle in his eye, " verra awkward indeed—*for the coo !* "

WITH never a thought we board the bus
And thoughtlessly take our seats—
Such is the tribute that we pay
The pilots who skilfully day by day,
Dodging the dangers by the way.
So daringly thrid the streets.

Walter Jerrold.

The Smooth-Running Post-Chaise

A POST-CHAISE involves the idea of travelling, which in the company of those we love is home in motion. The smooth running along the road, the fresh air, the variety of scene, the leafy roads, the bursting prospects, the clatter through a town, the gaping gaze of a village, the hearty appetite, the leisure (your chaise waiting only upon your own movements), even the little contradictions to home-comfort, and the expedients upon which they set us, all put the animal spirits at work, and throw a novelty over the road of life. If anything could grind us young again, it would be the wheels of a post-chaise.

Leigh Hunt.

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TRILBY

By GEORGE DU MAURIER

"Taffy," "The Laird" and "Little Billee," bohemian art students, happy bachelors and inseparable companions, are visited at their studio in the Latin quarter of Paris by Trilby O'Ferrall, a captivating Irish girl who is an artists' model, and has "two of the most beautiful feet in Paris." Trilby sings to the students, and Svengali, a German musician of repulsive appearance but brilliant accomplishments, who joins the party, tells her that she has a wonderful voice.

Svengali, discovering Trilby in great pain, cures her by mesmerism. In this way he gradually obtains a sinister control over her personality. Meanwhile, Trilby and the three art students are on affectionate terms; but Little Billee is determined to marry her. Realising this, Trilby suffers qualms on account of her past, care-free mode of existence.

Little Billee's parents, anxious for their son's future, arrive in Paris, and Trilby voluntarily renounces all claim to Little Billee's affection. When Little Billee hears this he is frantic with grief, and falls seriously ill. Meanwhile, Trilby quietly disappears.

THE news was, of course, kept from Little Billee. There was no difficulty about this. He never asked a question, hardly ever spoke.

When he first got up and was carried into the studio he asked for his picture, "The Pitcher Goes to the Well," and looked at it for a while, and then shrugged his shoulders and laughed—a miserable sort of laugh, painful to hear and see—the laugh of a cold, old man, who laughs so as not to cry! Then he looked at his mother and sister, and saw the sad havoc that grief and anxiety had wrought in them.

It seemed to him, as in a bad dream, that he had been mad for many years—a cause of endless sickening terror and distress; and that his poor weak wandering wits had come back at last, bringing in their train cruel remorse, and the remembrance of all the patient love and kindness that had been lavished on him, for many, many years! His sweet sister—his dear, long-suffering mother: what had really happened to make them look like this?

And taking them both in his feeble arms, he fell a-weeping, quite desperately and for a long time.

And when his weeping-fit was over, when he had quite wept himself out, he fell asleep.

And when he awoke he was conscious that another sad thing had happened to him, and that for some mysterious cause his power of loving had not come back with his wandering wits—had been left behind—and it seemed to him that it was gone for ever and ever—would never come back again—not even his love for his mother and sister, not even his love for Trilby—where all *that* had once been was a void, a gap, a blankness. . . .

Truly, if Trilby had suffered much, she had also been the innocent cause of terrible suffering. Poor Mrs. Bagot, in her heart, could not forgive her.

I feel this is getting to be quite a sad story, and that it is high time to cut this part of it short.

As the warmer weather came, and Little Billee got stronger, the studio became more lively. The ladies' beds were removed to another studio on the next landing, which was vacant, and the friends came to see Little Billee and make life more easy for him and his mother and sister.

As for Taffy and the Laird, they had already long been to Mrs. Bagot as a pair of crutches, without whose invaluable help she could never have held herself upright to pick her way in all this maze of trouble.

Then M. Carrel came to chat with his favourite pupil and gladden Mrs. Bagot's heart. And also Durien, Carnegie, Petrolicoconose, Vincent, Antony, Lorrimer, Dodor and l'Zouzou; Mrs. Bagot thought the last two irresistible, when she had once been satisfied that they were "gentlemen," in spite of appearances. And, indeed, they showed themselves to great advantage, and though they were so much the opposite to Little Billee in everything, she felt almost maternal towards them, and gave them innocent, good, motherly advice, which they swallowed *avec attendrissement*, not even stealing a look at each other. And they held Mrs. Bagot's wool and listened to Miss Bagot's sacred music with upturned pious eyes and mealy mouths that butter wouldn't melt in!

It is good to be a soldier and a detrimental; you touch the hearts of women and charm them—old and young, high or low (excepting, perhaps, a few worldly mothers of marriageable daughters). They take the sticking of your tongue in the cheek for the wearing of your heart on the sleeve.

Indeed, good women all over the world, and ever since it began, have loved to be bamboozled by these genial, roistering dare-devils, who haven't got a penny to bless themselves with (which is so touching), and are supposed to carry their lives in their hands, even in piping times of peace. Nay, even a few rare *bad* women sometimes; such women as the best and wisest of us are often ready to sell our souls for!

"A lightsome eye, a soldier's mien,
A feather of the blue,
A doublet of the Lincoln green—
No more of me you knew,
My love!
No more of me you knew. . . ."

As if that wasn't enough, and to spare!

Little Billee could hardly realise that these two polite and gentle and sympathetic sons of Mars were the lively grigs who had made themselves so pleasant all round, and in such a singular manner, on the top of that St. Cloud omnibus; and he admired how they added hypocrisy to their other crimes!

Svengali had gone back to Germany, it seemed, with his pockets full of napoleons and big Havana cigars, and wrapped in an immense fur-lined coat, which he meant to wear all through the summer. But little Gecko often came with his violin and made lovely music, and that seemed to do Little Billee more good than anything else.

It made him realise in his brain all the love he could no longer feel in his heart. The sweet melodic phrase, rendered by a master, was as wholesome, refreshing balm to him while it lasted—as manna in the wilderness. It was the one good thing within his reach, never to be taken from him as long as his ear-drums remained and he could hear a master play.

Poor Gecko treated the two English ladies *de bas en haut* as if they had been goddesses, even when they accompanied him on the piano! He begged their pardon for every wrong note they struck, and adopted their "tempi"—that is the proper technical term, I believe—and turned scherzos and allegrettos into funeral dirges to please them; and agreed with them, poor little traitor, that it all sounded much better like that!

O Beethoven! O Mozart! Did you turn in your graves?

Then, on fine afternoons, Little Billee was taken for drives to the Bois de Boulogne with his mother and sister in an open fly, and generally Taffy as a fourth; to Passy, Auteuil, Boulogne, St. Cloud, Meudon—there are many charming places within an easy drive of Paris.

And sometimes Taffy or the Laird would escort Mrs. and Miss Bagot to the Luxembourg Gallery, the Louvre, the Palais Royal; to the Comédie Française once or twice: and on Sundays, now and then, to the English chapel in the Rue Marbœuf. It was all very pleasant; and Miss Bagot looks back on the days of her brother's convalescence as among the happiest in her life.

And they would all five dine together in the studio, with Madame Vinard to wait, and her mother (a cordon bleu) for cook; and the whole aspect of the place was changed and made fragrant, sweet and charming by all this new feminine invasion and occupation.

And what is sweeter to watch than the dawn and growth of love's young dream, when strength and beauty meet together by the couch of a beloved invalid?

Of course the sympathetic reader will foresee how readily the stalwart Taffy fell a victim to the charms of his friend's sweet sister, and how she grew to return his more than brotherly regard, and how, one lovely evening, just as March was going out like a lamb (to make room for the First of April), Little Billee joined their hands together and gave them his brotherly blessing!

As a matter of fact, however, nothing of this kind happened. Nothing ever happens but the *un*foreseen. Pazienza!

Then at length one day—it was a fine, sunny, showery day in April, by the bye, and the big studio window was open at the top and let in a pleasant breeze from the north west, just as when our little story began—a railway omnibus drew up at the porte cochère in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, and carried away to the station of the Chemin de Fer du Nord Little Billee and his mother and sister, and all their belongings (the famous picture had gone before); and Taffy and the Laird rode with them, their faces very long, to see the last of the dear people, and of the train that was to bear them away from Paris; and Little Billee, with his quick, prehensile, æsthetic eye, took many a long and wistful parting gaze at many a French thing he loved, from the grey towers of Notre Dame downward—Heaven only knew when he might see them again!—so he tried to get their aspect well by heart, that he might have the better store of beloved shape and colour memories to chew the cud of when his lost powers of loving and remembering clearly should come back, and he lay awake at night and listened to the wash of the Atlantic along the beautiful red sandstone coast at home.

He had a faint hope that he would feel sorry at parting with Taffy and the Laird.

But when the time came for saying good-bye he couldn't feel sorry in the least, for all he tried and strained so hard!

So he thanked them so earnestly and profusely for all their kindness and patience and sympathy (as did also his mother and sister) that their

hearts were too full to speak, and their manner was quite gruff—it was a way they had when they were deeply moved and didn't want to show it.

And as he gazed out of the carriage window at their two forlorn figures looking after him when the train steamed out of the station, his sorrow at not feeling sorry made him look so haggard and so woe-begone that they could scarcely bear the sight of him departing without them, and almost felt as if they must follow by the next train, and go and cheer him up in Devonshire, and themselves, too.

They did not yield to this amiable weakness. Sorrowfully, arm-in-arm, with trailing umbrellas, they re-crossed the river and found their way to the Café de l'Odéon, where they ate many omelets in silence, and dejectedly drank of the best they could get, and were very sad indeed.

¶

NEARLY five years have elapsed since we bade farewell and *au revoir* to Taffy and the Laird at the Paris station of the Chemin de Fer du Nord, and wished Little Billee and his mother and sister Godspeed on their way to Devonshire, where the poor sufferer was to rest and lie fallow for a few months, and recruit his lost strength and energy, that he might follow up his first and well-deserved success, which perhaps contributed just a little to his recovery.

Many of my readers will remember his splendid *début* at the Royal Academy in Trafalgar Square with that now so famous canvas, "The Pitcher Goes to the Well," and how it was sold three times over on the morning of the private view, the third time for a thousand pounds—just five times what he got for it himself. And that was thought a large sum in those days for a beginner's picture two feet by four.

I am well aware that such a vulgar test is no criterion whatever of a picture's real merit. But this picture is well known to all the world by this time, and sold only last year at Christie's (more than thirty-six years after it was painted) for three thousand pounds.

Thirty-six years! That goes a long way to redeem even three thousand pounds of all their cumulative vulgarity.

"The Pitcher" is now in the National Gallery, with that other canvas by the same hand, "The Moon-Dial." There they hang together for all who care to see them, his first and his last—the blossom and the fruit.

He had not long to live himself, and it was his good fortune, so rare among those whose work is probably destined to live for ever, that he succeeded at his first go off.

And his success was of the best and most flattering kind.

It began high up, where it should, among the masters of his own craft. But his fame filtered quickly down to those immediately beneath, and through these to wider circles. And there was quite enough of opposition and vilification and coarse abuse of him to clear it of any suspicion of cheapness or evanescence. What better antiseptic can there be than the philistine's deep hate? What sweeter, fresher, wholesomer music than the sound of his voice when he doth so furiously rage?

Yes! That is "good production"—as Svengali would have said—"C'est un cri du cœur."

And then, when popular acclaim brings the great dealers and the big cheques, up rises the printed howl of the duffer, the disappointed one, the "wounded thing with an angry cry"—the prosperous and happy bagman that *should* have been, who has given up all for art and finds he can't paint and make himself a name, after all, and never will, so falls to writing about those who can—and what writing!

To write in hissing dispraise of our more successful fellow-craftsman, and of those who admire him—that is not a clean or pretty trade. It seems, alas! an easy one, and it gives pleasure to so many. It does not even want good grammar. But it pays—well enough even to start and run a magazine with, instead of scholarship, and taste, and talent, humour, sense, wit and wisdom! It is something like the purveying of pornographic pictures: some of us look at them and laugh, and even buy. To be a purchaser is bad enough; but to be the purveyor thereof—ugh!

A poor devil of a cracked soprano (are there such people still?) who has been turned out of the Pope's choir because he can't sing in tune, *after all*!—think of him yelling and squeaking his treble rage at Santley—Sims Reeves—Lablache!

Poor, lost, beardless nondescript, why not fly to other climes, where at least thou might'st hide from us thy woful crack, and keep thy miserable secret to thyself! Are there no harems still left in Stamboul for the likes of thee to sweep and clean, no women's beds to make and slops to empty, and doors and windows to bar—and tales to carry and the pasha's confidence and favour and protection to win? Even *that* is a better trade than pandering for hire to the basest instinct of all—the dirty pleasure we feel (some of us) in seeing mud and dead cats and rotten eggs flung at those we cannot but admire—and secretly envy!

All of which eloquence means that Little Billee was pitched into right and left, as well as overpraised. And it all rolled off him like water off a duck's back, both praise and blame.

It was a happy summer for Mrs. Bagot, a sweet compensation for all the anguish of the winter that had gone before, with her two beloved children together under her wing, and all the world (for her) ringing with the praise of her boy, the apple of her eye, so providentially

rescued from the very jaws of death, and from other dangers almost as terrible to her fiercely-jealous maternal heart.

And his affection for her *seemed* to grow with his returning health; but, alas, he was never again to be quite the same light-hearted, innocent expansive lad he had been before that fatal year spent in Paris.

One chapter of his life was closed, never to be re-opened, never to be spoken of again by him to her, by her to him. She could neither forgive nor forget. She could but be silent.

Otherwise he was pleasant and sweet to live with, and everything was done to make his life at home as sweet and pleasant as a loving mother could—as could a most charming sister—and others' sisters who were charming, too, and much disposed to worship at the shrine of this young celebrity, who woke up one morning in their little village to find himself famous, and bore his blushing honours so meekly. And among them the vicar's daughter, his sister's friend and co-teacher at the Sunday school, "a simple, pure and pious maiden of gentle birth," everything he once thought a young lady should be; and her name it was Alice, and she was sweet, and her hair was brown—as brown! . . .

And if he no longer found the simple country pleasures, the junketings and picnics, the garden parties and innocent little musical evenings, quite so exciting as of old, he never showed it.

Indeed, there was much that he did not show, and that his mother and sister tried in vain to guess—many things.

And among them one thing that constantly preoccupied and distressed him—the numbness of his affections. He could be as easily demonstrative to his mother and sister as though nothing had ever happened to him—from the mere force of a sweet old habit—even more so, out of sheer gratitude and compunction.

But alas, he felt that in his heart he could no longer care for them in the least!—nor for Taffy, nor the Laird, nor for himself; not even for Trilby, of whom he constantly thought, but without emotion; and of whose strange disappearance he had been told, and the story had been confirmed in all its details by Angèle Boisse, to whom he had written.

It was as though some part of his brain where his affections were seated had been paralysed, while all the rest of it was as keen and as active as ever. He felt like some poor live bird or beast or reptile, a part of whose cerebrum (or cerebellum, or whatever it is) had been dug out by the vivisector for experimental purposes; and the strongest emotional feeling he seemed capable of was his anxiety and alarm about this curious symptom, and his concern as to whether he ought to mention it or not.

He did not do so, for fear of causing distress, hoping that it would pass away in time, and redoubled his caresses to his mother and sister, and clung to them more than ever; and became more considerate of others in thought and manner, word and deed than he had ever been before, as though by constantly assuming the virtue he had no longer he would gradually coax it back again. There was no trouble he would not take to give pleasure to the humblest.

Also, his vanity about himself had become as nothing, and he missed it almost as much as his affection.

Yet he told himself over and over again that he was a great artist, and that he would spare no pains to make himself a greater. But that was no merit of his own.

$2 + 2 = 4$, also $2 \times 2 = 4$: that peculiarity was no reason why 4 should be conceited; for, what was 4 but a result, either way?

Well, he was like 4—just an inevitable result of circumstances over which he had no control—a mere product or sum; and though he meant to make himself as big a 4 as he could (to cultivate his peculiar *fourness*), he could no longer feel the old conceit and self complacency; and they had been a joy, and it was hard to do without them.

At the bottom of it all was a vague, disquieting unhappiness, a constant fidget.

And it seemed to him, and much to his distress, that such mild unhappiness would be the greatest he could ever feel henceforward—but that, such as it was, it would never leave him, and that his moral existence would be for evermore one long grey gloomy blank—the glimmer of twilight—never glad, confident morning again!

So much for Little Billee's convalescence.

Then one day in the late autumn he spread his wings and flew away to London, which was very ready with open arms to welcome William Bagot, the already famous painter, *alias* Little Billee!

¶

WHEN Taffy and the Laird went back to the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, and resumed their ordinary life there, it was with a sense of desolation and dull bereavement beyond anything they could have imagined; and this did not seem to lessen as the time wore on.

They realised for the first time how keen and penetrating and unintermittent had been the charm of those two central figures—Trilby and Little Billee—and how hard it was to live without them, after such intimacy as had been theirs.

"Oh, it *has* been a jolly time, though it didn't last long!" So Trilby had written in her farewell letter to Taffy; and these words were true for Taffy and the Laird as well as for her.

And that is the worst of those dear people who have charm; they are so terrible to do without when once you have got accustomed to them and all their ways.

And when, besides being charming, they are simple, clever, affectionate, constant and sincere, like Trilby and Little Billee! Then the lamentable hole their disappearance makes is not to be filled up! And when they are full of genius, like Little Billee—and like Trilby, funny without being vulgar! For so she always seemed to the Laird and Taffy, even in French (in spite of her Gallic audacities of thought, speech and gesture).

All seemed to have suffered change. The very boxing and fencing were gone through perfunctorily, for mere health's sake; and a thin layer of adipose deposit began to soften the outlines of the hills and dales on Taffy's mighty forearm.

Dodor and l'Zouzou no longer came so often, now that the charming Little Billee and his charming mother and still more charming sister had gone away—nor Carnegie, nor Antony, nor Lorrimer, nor Vincent, nor the Greek. Gecko never came at all. Even Svengali was missed, little as he had been liked. It is a dismal and sulky-looking piece of furniture, a grand piano that nobody ever plays—with all its sound and its souvenirs locked up inside—a kind of mausoleum, a lop sided coffin, trestles and all! So it went back to London by the "little quickness," just as it had come!

Thus Taffy and the Laird grew quite sad and mopy, and lunched at the Café de l'Odéon every day—till the goodness of the omelets palled, and the redness of the wine there got on their nerves and into their heads and faces, and made them sleepy till dinner-time. And then, waking up, they dressed respectably and dined expensively, "like gentlemen," in the Palais Royal, or the Passage Choiseul, or the Passages des Panoramas—for three francs, three francs fifty, even five francs a head, and half a franc to the waiter!—and went to the theatre almost every night, on that side of the water—and more often than not they took a cab home, each smoking a Panatellas, which costs twenty-five centimes—five sous—twopence halfpenny!

Then they feebly drifted into quite decent society—like Lorrimer and Carnegie—with dress-coats and white ties on, and their hair parted in the middle and down the back of the head, and brought over the ears in a bunch at each side, as was the English fashion in those days; and subscribed to *Galignani's Messenger;* and had themselves proposed and seconded for the Cercle Anglais in the Rue Sainte-n'y Touche, a circle of British philistines of the very deepest dye; and went to hear divine service on Sunday mornings in Rue Marbœuf!

Indeed, by the end of the summer they had sunk into such depths of demoralisation that they felt they must really have a change, and decided on giving up the studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, and leaving Paris for good; and going to settle for the winter in Düsseldorf, which is a very pleasant place for English painters who do not wish to overwork themselves—as the Laird well knew, having spent a year there.

It ended in Taffy's going to Antwerp for the Kermesse, to paint the Flemish drunkard of our time just as he really is, and the Laird's going to Spain, so that he might study toreadors from the life.

I may as well state here that the Laird's toreador pictures, which had had quite a vogue in Scotland as long as he had been content to paint them in the Place St. Anatole des Arts, quite ceased to please (or sell) after he had been to Seville and Madrid; so he took to painting Roman cardinals and Neapolitan pifferari from the depths of his consciousness—and was so successful that he made up his mind he would never spoil his market by going to Italy!

So he went and painted his cardinals and his pifferari in Algiers, and Taffy joined him there and painted Algerian Jews—just as they really are (and didn't sell them); and then they spent a year in Munich, and then a year in Düsseldorf, and a winter in Cairo, and so on.

And all this time Taffy, who took everything *au grand sérieux*—especially the claims and obligations of friendship—corresponded regularly with Little Billee, who wrote him long and amusing letters back again, and had plenty to say about his life in London—which was a series of triumphs, artistic and social—and you would have thought from his letters, modest though they were, that no happier young man, or more elate, was to be found anywhere in the world.

It was a good time in England just then for young artists of promise, a time of evolution, revolution, change and development—of the founding of new schools and the crumbling away of old ones—a keen struggle for existence—a surviving of the fit—a preparation, let us hope, for the ultimate survival of the fittest.

And among the many glories of this particular period two names stand out very conspicuously—for the immediate and (so far) lasting fame their bearers achieved, and the wide influence they exerted and continue to exert still.

The world will not easily forget Frederic Walker and William Bagot, those two singularly gifted boys, whom it soon became the fashion to bracket together, to compare and to contrast, as one compares and contrasts Thackeray and Dickens, Carlyle and Macaulay, Tennyson and Browning—a futile though pleasant practice, of which the temptations seem irresistible!

Yet why compare the lily and the rose?

These two young masters had the genius and the luck to be the progenitors of much of the best art work that has been done in England during the last thirty years, in oils, in water colour, in black and white.

They were both essentially English and of their own time; both absolutely original, receiving their impressions straight from nature itself, uninfluenced by any school, ancient or

modern, they founded schools instead of following any, and each was a law unto himself, and a law-giver unto many others. Both were equally great in whatever they attempted—landscape, figures, birds, beasts or fishes. Who does not remember the fishmonger's shop, by F. Walker, or W. Bagot's little piebald pighings, and their venerable black mother and their immense fat wallowing pink papa? An ineffable charm of poetry and refinement, of pathos and sympathy and delicate humour combined, an incomparable ease and grace and felicity of workmanship belong to each; and yet in their work are they not as wide apart as the poles; each complete in himself and yet a complement to the other?

And, oddly enough, they were both singularly alike in aspect—both small and slight, though beautifully made, with tiny hands and feet; always arrayed as the lilies of the field, for all they toiled and spun so arduously; both had regularly-featured faces of a noble cast and most winning character; both had the best and simplest manners in the world, and a way of getting themselves much and quickly and permanently liked. . . .

Que la terre leur soit légère!

And who can say that the fame of one is greater than the other's?

But it is not with the art of Little Billee, nor with his fame as a painter, that we are chiefly concerned in this unpretending little tale, except in so far as they have some bearing on his character and his fate.

"I should like to know the detailed history of the Englishman's first love and how he lost his innocence!"

"Ask him!"

"Ask him yourself!"

Thus Papelard and Bouchardy, on the morning of Little Billee's first appearance at Carrel's studio, in the Rue des Potirons St. Michel.

And that is the question the present scribe is doing his little best to answer.

A good-looking, famous, well-bred and well-dressed youth finds that London society opens its doors very readily; he hasn't long to knock; and it would be difficult to find a youth more fortunately situated, handsomer, more famous, better dressed or better bred, more seemingly happy and successful, with more attractive qualities and more condonable faults, than Little Billee, as Taffy and the Laird found him when they came to London after their four or five years in foreign parts—their Wanderjahr.

He had a fine studio and a handsome suite of rooms in Fitzroy Square. Beautiful specimens of his unfinished work, endless studies, hung on his studio walls. Everything else was as nice as it could be—the furniture, the bibelots, and bric-à-brac, the artistic foreign and Eastern knick-knacks and draperies and hangings and curtains and rugs—the semi-grand piano by Collard and Collard.

That immortal canvas, the "Moon-Dial" (just begun, and already commissioned by Moses Lyon, the famous picture-dealer), lay on his easel.

No man worked harder and with teeth more clinched than Little Billee when he was at work—none rested or played more discreetly when it was time to rest or play.

The glass on his mantelpiece was full of cards of invitation, reminders, pretty mauve and pink and lilac scented notes, nor were coronets wanting on many of these hospitable little missives. He had quite overcome his fancied aversion for bloated dukes and lords and the rest (we all do sooner or later, if things go well with us); especially for their wives and sisters and daughters and female cousins; even their mothers and aunts. In point of fact, and in spite of his tender years, he was in some danger (for his art) of developing into that type so adored by sympathetic women who haven't got much to do: the friend, the tame cat, the platonic lover (with many loves)—the squire of dames, the trusty one, of whom husbands and brothers have no fear!—the delicate, harmless dilettante of Eros—the dainty shepherd who dwells "dans le pays du tendre!"—and stops there!

¶

IN this harmless fashion Little Billee was friends with more than one fine lady *de par le monde*.

Indeed, he had been reproached by his more bohemian brothers of the brush for being something of a tuft-hunter—most unjustly. But nothing gives such keen offence to our unsuccessful brother, bohemian or bourgeois, as our sudden intimacy with the so-called great, the little lords and ladies of this little world! Not even our fame and success, and all the joy and pride they bring us, are so hard to condone—so embittering, so humiliating, to the jealous fraternal heart.

Alas! poor humanity—that the mere countenance of our betters (if they *are* our betters!) should be thought so priceless a boon, so consummate an achievement, so crowning a glory, as all that!

"A dirty bit of orange-peel,
The stump of a cigar—
Once trod on by a princely heel,
How beautiful they are!"

Little Billee was no tuft-hunter—he was the tuft-hunted, or had been. No one of his kind was ever more persistently, resolutely, hospitably harried than this young "hare with many friends" by people of rank and fashion.

And at first he thought them most charming, as they so often are, these graceful, gracious, gay, good-natured stoics and barbarians, whose manners are as easy and simple as their morals—but how much better!—and who, at least, have this charm, that they can wallow in untold gold (when they happen to possess it) without

ever seeming to stink of the same: yes, they bear wealth gracefully—and the want of it more gracefully still, and these are pretty accomplishments that have yet to be learned by our new aristocracy of the shop and counting-house, Jew or Gentile, which is everywhere elbowing its irresistible way to the top and front of everything, both here and abroad.

Then he discovered that, much as you might be with them, you could never be *of* them, unless perchance you managed to hook on by marrying one of their ugly ducklings—their failures—their remnants! And even then life isn't all beer and skittles for a rank outsider, I'm told! Then he discovered that he didn't want to be *of* them in the least, especially at such a cost as that! And that to be very much *with* them was apt to pall, like everything else!

Also, he found that they were very mixed—good, bad and indifferent—and not always very dainty or select in their predilections, since they took unto their bosoms such queer outsiders (just for the sake of being amused a little while) that their capricious favour ceased to be an honour and a glory—if it ever was! And then, their fickleness!

Indeed, he found, or thought he found, that they could be just as clever, as liberal, as polite or refined—as narrow, insolent, swaggering, coarse and vulgar—as handsome, as ugly—as graceful, as ungainly—as modest or conceited, as any other upper class of the community—and indeed some lower ones!

Beautiful young women, who had been taught how to paint pretty little landscapes (with an ivy-mantled ruin in the middle distance), talked technically of painting to him, *de pair à pair*, as though they were quite on the same artistic level, and didn't mind admitting it, in spite of the social gulf between.

Hideous old frumps (osseous or obese, yet with unduly bared necks and shoulders that made him sick) patronised him and gave him good advice, and told him to emulate Mr. Buckner both in his genius and his manners—since Mr. Buckner was the only "gentleman" who ever painted for hire; and they promised him, in time, an equal success!

Here and there some sweet old darling specially enslaved him by her kindness, grace, knowledge of life and tender womanly sympathy, like the dowager Lady Chiselhurst, or some sweet young one, like the lovely Duchess of Towers, by her beauty, wit, good-humour and sisterly interest in all he did, and who, in some vague, distant manner constantly reminded him of Trilby, although she was such a great and fashionable lady.

But just such darlings, old or young, were to be found, with still higher ideals, in less exalted spheres; and were easier of access, with no impassable gulf between—spheres where there was no patronising, nothing but deference and warm appreciation and delicate flattery, from men and women alike—and where the aged Venuses, whose prime was of the days of Waterloo, went with their historical remains duly shrouded, like ivy-mantled ruins (and in the middle distance!).

So he actually grew tired of the great before they had time to tire of him—incredible as it may seem, and against nature; and this saved him many a heart burning, and he ceased to be seen at fashionable drums or gatherings of any kind, except in one or two houses where he was especially liked and made welcome for his own sake; such as Lord Chiselhurst's in Piccadilly, where the "Moon-Dial" found a home for a few years before going to its last home and final resting-place in the National Gallery (*R.I.P.*); or Baron Stoppenheim's, in Cavendish Square, where many lovely little water-colours signed W. B. occupied places of honour on gorgeously-gilded walls; or the gorgeously-gilded bachelor rooms of Mr. Moses Lyon, the picture-dealer, in Upper Conduit Street—for Little Billee (I must grieve to say it of a hero of romance) was an excellent man of business. That infinitesimal dose of the good old Oriental blood kept him straight, and not only made him stick to his last through thick and thin, but also to those whose foot his last was found to match (for he couldn't or wouldn't alter his last).

He loved to make as much money as he could, that he might spend it royally in pretty gifts to his mother and sister, whom it was his pleasure to load in this way, and whose circumstances had been very much altered by his quick success. There was never a more generous son or brother than Little Billee of the clouded heart, that couldn't love any longer!

As a set-off to all these splendours, it was also his pleasure now and again to study London life at its lower den—the eastest end of all. Whitechapel, the Minories, the Docks, Ratcliffe Highway, Rotherhithe, soon got to know him well, and he found much to interest him and much to like among their denizens, and made as many friends there among ship-carpenters, excise-men, longshoremen, jack-tars and what not, as in Bayswater and Belgravia (or Bloomsbury).

He was especially fond of frequenting sing-songs or "free-and-easies," where good hard-working fellows met of an evening to relax and smoke and drink and sing, round a table well loaded with steaming tumblers and pewter pots, at one end of which sits Mr. Chairman in all his glory, and at the other "Mr. Vice." They are open to anyone who can afford a pipe, a screw of tobacco and a pint of beer, and who is willing to do his best and sing a song.

No introduction is needed; as soon as anyone has seated himself and made himself comfortable Mr. Chairman taps the table with his long clay pipe, begs for silence, and says to his vis-à-vis: "Mr. Vice, it strikes me as the gen'l'man as is just come in 'as got a singing

face. Per'aps, Mr. Vice, you'll be so very kind as juster harsk the aforesaid gentl'man to oblige us with a 'armony."

Mr. Vice then puts it to the new-comer, who, thus appealed to, simulates a modest surprise, and finally professes his willingness, like Mr. Barkis; then, clearing his throat a good many times, looks up to the ceiling, and after one or two unsuccessful starts in different keys, bravely sings "Kathleen Mavourneen," let us say—perhaps in a touchingly sweet tenor voice:

"Kathleen Mavourneen, the gry dawn is brykin,
The 'orn of the 'unter is 'eard on the 'ill . . ."

And Little Billee didn't mind the dropping of all these aitches if the voice was sympathetic and well in tune, and the sentiment simple, tender and sincere.

Or else, with a good rolling jingo bass, it was:

"'Earts o' hoak are our ships; 'earts o' hoak are our men;
And we'll fight and we'll conkwer agen and agen!"

And no imperfection of accent, in Little Billee's estimation, subtracted one jot from the manly British pluck that found expression in these noble sentiments, nor added one tittle to their swaggering, blatant and idiotically aggressive vulgarity!

Well, the song finishes with general applause all round. Then the chairman says: "Your 'ealth and song, sir!" And drinks, and all do the same.

Then Mr. Vice asks: "What shall we 'ave the pleasure of saying, sir, after that very nice 'armony?"

And the blushing vocalist, if he knows the ropes, replies: "A roast leg o' mutton in Newgate, and nobody to eat it!" Or else: "May 'im as is going up the 'ill o' prosperity never meet a friend coming down!" Or else: "'Ere's to 'er as shares our sorrers and doubles our joys!" Or else: "'Ere's to 'er as shares our joys and doubles our expenses!" and so forth.

More drinks, more applause and many "'Ear 'ear's." And Mr. Vice says to the singer: "You call, sir. Will you be so good as to call on some other gen'l'man for a 'armony?" And so the evening goes on.

And nobody was more quickly popular at such gatherings, or sang better songs, or proposed more touching sentiments, or filled either chair or vice-chair with more grace and dignity than Little Billee. Not even Dodor or l'Zouzou could have beaten him at that.

And he was as happy, as genial and polite, as much at his ease in these humble gatherings as in the gilded saloons of the great, where grand pianos are, and hired accompanists, and highly paid singers, and a good deal of talk while they sing.

So his powers of quick, wide, universal sympathy grew and grew, and made up to him a little for his lost power of being specially fond of special individuals. For he made no close friends among men, and ruthlessly snubbed all attempts at intimacy—all advances towards an affection which he felt he could not return; and more than one enthusiastic admirer of his talent and his charm was forced to acknowledge that, with all his gifts, he seemed heartless and capricious, as ready to drop you as he had been to take you up.

He loved to be wherever he could meet his kind, high or low, and felt as happy on a penny steamer as on the yacht of a millionaire—on the crowded knifeboard of an omnibus as on the box-seat of a nobleman's drag—happier; he liked to feel the warm contact of his fellow-man at either shoulder and at his back, and didn't object to a little honest grime! And I think all this genial caressing love of his kind, this depth and breadth of human sympathy, are patent in all his work.

On the whole, however, he came to prefer for society that of the best and cleverest of his own class—those who live and prevail by the professional exercise of their own specially-trained and highly-educated wits, the skilled workmen of the brain—from the Lord Chief Justice of England downward—the salt of the earth, in his opinion; and stuck to them.

There is no class so genial and sympathetic as *our own*, in the long run—even if it be but the criminal class!—none where the welcome is likely to be so genuine and sincere, so easy to win, so difficult to outstay, if we be but decently pleasant and successful; none where the memory of us will be kept so green (if we leave any memory at all!)

So Little Billee found it expedient, when he wanted rest and play, to seek them at the houses of those whose rest and play were like his own—little halts in a seeming happy life-journey, full of toil and strain and endeavour; oases of sweet water and cooling shade, where the food was good and plentiful, though the tents might not be of cloth of gold; where the talk was of something more to his taste than court or sport or narrow party politics; the new beauty; the coming match of the season; the coming ducal conversion to Rome; the last elopement in high life—the next; and where the music was that of the greatest music-makers that can be, who found rest and play in making better music for love than they ever made for hire—and were listened to as they should be, with understanding and religious silence, and all the fervent gratitude they deserved.

There were several such houses in London then—and are still, thank Heaven! And Little Billee had his little billet there—and there he was wont to drown himself in waves of lovely sound, or streams of clever talk, or rivers of sweet feminine adulation, seas, oceans—a somewhat relaxing bath!—and forget for a while his everlasting chronic plague of heart-insensibility, which no doctor could explain or cure, and to which he was becoming gradually resigned—as one does to deafness or blindness or locomotor

ataxia—for it had lasted nearly five years! But now and again, during sleep, and in a blissful dream, the lost power of loving—of loving mother, sister, friend—would be restored to him, just as with a blind man who sometimes dreams he has recovered his sight; and the joy of it would wake him to the sad reality, till he got to know, even in his dream, that he was only dreaming after all, whenever that priceless boon seemed to be his own once more—and did his utmost not to wake. And these were nights to be marked with a white stone, and remembered!

And nowhere was he happier than at the houses of the great surgeons and physicians who interested themselves in his strange disease. When the Little Billees of this world fall ill, the great surgeons and physicians (like the great singers and musicians) do better for them, out of mere love and kindness, than for the princes of the earth, who pay them thousand-guinea fees and load them with honours.

¶

AND of all these notable London houses none was pleasanter than that of Cornelys, the great sculptor, and Little Billee was such a favourite in that house that he was able to take his friends Taffy and the Laird there the very day they came to London.

First of all they dined together at a delightful little Franco-Italian pothouse near Leicester Square, where they had *bouillabaisse* (imagine the Laird's delight), and *spaghetti*, and a *poulet rôti*, which is *such* a different affair from a roast fowl, and salad, which Taffy was allowed to make and mix himself; and they all smoked just where they sat, the moment they had swallowed their food—as had been their way in the good old Paris days.

That dinner was a happy one for Taffy and the Laird, with their Little Billee apparently unchanged—as demonstrative, as genial and caressing as ever, and with no swagger to speak of; and with so many things to talk about that were new to them, and of such delightful interest. They also had much to say—but they didn't say very much about Paris, for fear of waking up Heaven knows what sleeping dogs!

And every now and again, in the midst of all this pleasant forgathering and communion of long-parted friends, the pangs of Little Billee's miserable mind-malady would shoot through him like poisoned arrows.

He would catch himself thinking how fat and fussy and serious about trifles Taffy had become, and what a shiftless, feckless, futile duffer was the Laird, and how greedy they both were, and how red and coarse their ears and gills and cheeks grew as they fed, and how shiny their faces; and how little he would care, try as he might, if they both fell down dead under the table! And this would make him behave more caressingly to them, more genially and demonstratively than ever—for he knew it was all a gruesome physical ailment of his own, which he could no more help than a cataract in his eye!

Then, catching sight of his own face and form in a mirror, he would curse himself for a puny, misgotten shrimp, an imp—an abortion—no bigger, by the side of the herculean Taffy or the burly Laird of Cockpen, than sixpenn'orth o' halfpence: a wretched little over-rated follower of a poor trivial craft—a mere light amuser! For what did pictures matter, or whether they were good or bad, except to the triflers who painted them, the dealers who sold them, the idle, uneducated, purse-proud fools who bought them and stuck them up on their walls because they were told!

And he felt that if a dynamite shell were beneath the table where they sat, and its fuse were smoking under their very noses, he would neither wish to warn his friends nor move himself. He didn't care a d——!

And all this made him so lively and brilliant in his talk, so fascinating and droll and witty, that Taffy and the Laird wondered at the improvement success and the experience of life had wrought in him, and marvelled at the happiness of his lot, and almost found it in their warm affectionate hearts to feel a touch of envy!

Oddly enough, in a brief flash of silence, "entre la poire et le fromage," they heard a foreigner at an adjoining table (one of a very noisy group) exclaim: "Mais quand je vous dis que j'l'ai entendue, moi, La Svengali! et même qu'elle a chanté l'Impromptu de Chopin absolument comme si c'était un piano qu'on jouait! voyons! . . ."

"Farceur! la bonne blague!" said another—and then the conversation became so noisily general it was no good listening any more.

"Svengali! How funny that name should turn up! I wonder what's become of *our* Svengali, by the way?" observed Taffy.

"I remember *his* playing Chopin's Impromptu," said Little Billee; "what a singular coincidence!"

There were to be more coincidences that night; it never rains them but it pours!

So our three friends finished their coffee and liqueured up, and went to Cornelys's three in a hansom—

"Like Mars,"
A-smokin' their poipes and cigyars."

Sir Louis Cornelys, lived in a palace on Campden Hill, a house of many windows; and whichever window he looked out of he saw his own garden and very little else. In spite of his years, he worked as hard as ever, and his hand had lost but little of its cunning. Now he no longer gives those splendid parties that made him almost as famous a host as he was an artist.

When his beautiful wife died he shut himself up from the world, and henceforth he never stirred out of his house and grounds except to fulfil his duties at the Royal Academy, and dine once a year with his sovereign.

It was very different in the early sixties. There was no pleasanter or more festive house than his in London, winter or summer—no lordlier host than he—no more irresistible hostesses than Lady Cornelys and her lovely daughters; and if ever music had a right to call itself divine, it was there you heard it—on late Saturday nights during the London season—when the foreign birds of song come over to reap their harvest in London Town.

It was on one of the most brilliant of these Saturday nights that Taffy and the Laird, chaperoned by Little Billee, made their *début* at Mechelen Lodge, and were received at the door of the immense music-room by a tall powerful man with splendid eyes and a grey beard, and a small velvet cap on his head—and by a Greek matron so beautiful and stately and magnificently attired that they felt inclined to sink them on their bended knees as in the presence of some overwhelming Eastern royalty—and were only prevented from doing so, perhaps, by the simple, sweet, and cordial graciousness of her welcome.

And whom should they be shaking hands with next but Antony, Lorrimer, and the Greek—with each a beard and moustache of nearly five years' growth!

But they had no time for much exuberant greeting, for there was a sudden piano crash—and then an immediate silence, as though for pins to drop—and Signor Giuglini and the wondrous maiden Adelina Patti sang the "Miserere" out of Signor Verdi's most famous opera—to the delight of all but a few very superior ones who had just read Mendelssohn's letters (or misread them) and despised Italian music, and thought cheaply of "mere virtuosity," either vocal or instrumental.

When this was over, Little Billee pointed out all the lions to his friends—from the Prime Minister down to the present scribe—who was right glad to meet them again and talk of auld lang syne, and present them to the daughters of the house and other charming ladies.

Then Roucouly, the great French baritone, sang Durien's favourite song:

"Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment;
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie . . ."

with quite a little drawing-room voice—but quite as divinely as he had sung "Noël, noël" at the Madeleine in full blast one certain Christmas Eve our three friends remembered well.

Then there was a violin solo by young Joachim, then as now the greatest violinist of his time; and a solo on the pianoforte by Madame Schumann, his only peeress! and these came as a wholesome check to the levity of those for whom all music is but an agreeable pastime, a mere emotional delight, in which the intellect has no part; and also as a well-deserved humiliation to all virtuosi who play so charmingly that they make their listeners forget the master who invented the music in the lesser master who interprets it!

For these two—man and woman—the highest of their kind, never let you forget it was Sebastian Bach they were playing—playing in absolute perfection, in absolute forgetfulness of themselves—so that if you weren't up to Bach you didn't have a very good time!

And what added so much to the charm of this delightful concert was that the guests were not packed together sardine-wise, as they are at most concerts; they were comparatively few and well chosen, and could get up and walk about and talk to their friends between the pieces, and wander off into other rooms and look at endless beautiful things, and stroll in the lovely grounds by moon or star or Chinese-lantern light.

And there the frivolous could sit and chat and laugh and flirt when Bach was being played inside; and the earnest wanderer up and down together in soul-communion, through darkened walks and groves and alleys where the sound of French or Italian warblings could not reach them, and talk in earnest tones of the great Zola, or Guy de Maupassant and Pierre Loti, and exult in beautiful English over the inferiority of English literature, English art, English music, English everything else.

Then, very late, a tall, good-looking, swarthy foreigner came in, with a roll of music in his hands, and his entrance made quite a stir; you heard all round: "Here's Glorioli," or "Ecco Glorioli," or "Voici Glorioli," till Glorioli got on your nerves. And beautiful ladies, ambassadresses, female celebrities of all kinds, fluttered up to him and cajoled and fawned—as Svengali would have said, "Prinzessen, Comtessen, Serene English Altessen!"—and they soon forgot their Highness and their Serenity!

For with very little pressing Glorioli stood up on the platform, with his accompanist by his side at the piano, and in his hands a sheet of music, at which he never looked. He looked at the beautiful ladies, and ogled and smiled; and from his scarcely-parted, moist, thick, bearded lips, which he always licked before singing, there issued the most ravishing sounds that had ever been heard from throat of man or woman or boy! He could sing both high and low and soft and loud, and the frivolous were bewitched, as was only to be expected; but even the earnestest of all, caught, surprised, rapt, astounded, shaken, tickled, teased, harrowed, tortured, tantalised, aggravated, seduced, demoralised, degraded, corrupted into mere naturalness, forgot to dissemble their delight.

It was but a simple little song that Glorioli sang, as light and pretty as it could well be,

almost worthy of the words it was written to, and the words are De Musset's; and I love them so much I cannot resist the temptation of setting them down here, for the mere sensuous delight of writing them, as though I had just composed them myself:

" Bonjour, Suzon, ma fleur des bois!
Es-tu toujours la plus jolie?
Je reviens, tel que tu me vois,
D'un grand voyage en Italie!
Du paradis j'ai fait le tour—
J'ai fait des vers—j'ai fait l'amour . . .
Mais que t'importe!
Je passe devant ta maison:
Ouvre ta porte!
Bonjour, Suzon!

" Je t'ai vue au temps des lilas.
Ton cœur joyeux venait d'éclore,
Et tu disais: 'Je ne veux pas,
Je ne veux pas qu'on m'aime encore.'
Qu'as-tu fait depuis mon départ?
Qui part trop tôt revient trop tard.
Mais que m'importe?
Je passe devant ta maison:
Ouvre ta porte!
Bonjour, Suzon!"

And when it began, and while it lasted, and after it was over, one felt really sorry for all the other singers. And nobody sang any more that night, for Glorioli was tired, and wouldn't sing again, and none were bold enough or disinterested enough to sing after him.

Some of my readers may remember that meteoric bird of song who, though a mere amateur, would condescend to sing for a hundred guineas in the saloons of the great (as Monsieur Jourdain sold cloth); who would sing still better for love and glory in the studios of his friends.

¶

FOR Glorioli—the biggest, handsomest and most distinguished-looking Jew that ever was—one of the Sephardim (one of the Seraphim!)—hailed from Spain, where he was junior partner in the great firm of Moralés, Peralés, Gonzalés, and Glorioli, wine merchants, Malaga. He travelled for his own firm; his wine was good, and he sold much of it in England. But his voice would bring him far more gold in the month he spent here, for his wines have been equalled—if it be not libellous to say so—but there was no voice like his anywhere in the world, and no more finished singer.

Anyhow, his voice got into Little Billee's head more than any wine, and the boy could talk of nothing else for days and weeks; and was so exuberant in his expressions of delight and gratitude that the great singer took a real fancy to him (especially when he was told that this fervent boyish admirer was one of the greatest of English painters); and as a mark of his esteem, privately confided to him after supper that every century two human nightingales were born—only two—a male and a female—and that he, Glorioli, was the representative " male rossignol of this soi-disant dix-neuvième siècle."

" I can well believe that! And the female, your mate that should be—*la rossignolle*, if there is such a word?" inquired Little Billee.

" Ah, mon ami . . it was Alboni, till la petite Adelina Patti came out a year or two ago; and now it is *La Svengali*."

" La Svengali?"

" Oui, mon fy! You will hear her some day—et vous m'en direz des nouvelles!"

" Why, you don't mean to say that she's got a better voice than Madame Alboni?"

" Mon ami, an apple is an excellent thing—until you have tried a peach! Her voice to that of Alboni is as a peach to an apple—I give you my word of honour! But, bah! the voice is a detail. It's what she does with it—it's incredible! It gives one cold all down the back! It drives you mad! It makes you weep hot tears by the spoonful! Ah, the tear, mon fy! tenez! I can draw everything but *that*! Ça n'est pas dans mes cordes! *I* can only madden with *love!* But La Svengali! . . . And then, in the middle of it all, prrrout! . . . she makes you laugh! Ah! le beau rire! faire rire avec des larmes plein les yeux—voilà qui me passe! . . . Mon ami, when I heard her it made me swear that even *I* would never try to sing any more—it seemed *too* absurd! And I kept my word for a month at least—and you know, je sais ce que je vaux, moi!"

" You are talking of La Svengali, I bet," said Signor Spartia.

" Oui, parbleu! You have heard her?"

" Yes—at Vienna last winter," rejoined the greatest singing-master in the world. " J'en suis fou! hélas! I thought *I* could teach a woman how to sing, till I heard that blackguard Svengali's pupil. He has married her, they say!"

" That *blackguard* Svengali!" exclaimed Little Billee . . . " why, that must be a Svengali I knew in Paris—a famous pianist, a friend of mine!"

" That's the man! also une fameuse crapule (sauf vot' respect); his real name is Adler. His mother was a Polish singer, and he was a pupil at the Leipsic Conservatorio. But he's an immense artist, and a great singing-master, to teach a woman like that! And such a woman! belle comme un ange—mais bête comme un pot. I tried to talk to her—all she can say is 'ja wohl,' or 'doch,' or 'nein,' or 'soh!' not a word of English or French or Italian, though she sings them, oh, but *divinely!* It is '*il bel canto*' come back to the world after a hundred years. . ."

" But what voice is it?" asked Little Billee.

" Every voice a mortal woman can have—three octaves—four! and of such a quality that people who can't tell one tune from another cry with pleasure at the mere sound of it directly they hear her, just like anybody else. Everything that Paganini could do with his violin, she does with her voice—only better—and what a voice! un vrai baume!"

"Now, I don't mind petting zat you are schbeaking of La Sfencali," said Herr Kreutzer, the famous composer, joining in. "Quelle merfeille, hein? I heard her in St. Betersburg, at ze Vinter Balace. Ze vomen all vent mat, and pulled off zeir bearls and tiamonts and kave zem to her—vent town on zeir knees and gried and gissed her hants. She tit not say vun vort! She tit not efen schmile! Ze men schnifelled in ze gorners, and looked at ze bictures, and tissempled—efen I, Johann Kreutzer! Efen ze Emperor?"

"You're joking," said Little Billee.

"My vrent, I neffer choke ven I talk apout zinging. You vill hear her zum tay yourzellof, and you vil! acree viz me zat zere are two classes of beoble who zing. In ze vun class, La Sfencali; in ze ozzer, all ze ozzer zingers!"

"And does she sing good music?"

"I ton't know. *All* music is koot ven *she* zings it. I forket ze zong; I can only sink of ze zinger. Any koot zinger can zing a beautiful zong and kif bleasure, I zubboce! But I voot zooner hear La Sfencali zing a scale zan anypotty else zing ze most peautiful zong in ze vorldt—efen vun of my own! Zat is berhaps howzung ze crate Italian zingers of ze last century. It vas a lost art, and she has found it; and she must haf pecun to zing pefore she pecan to schpeak—or else she voot not haf hat ze time to learn all zat she knows, for she is not yet zirty! She zings in Paris in Ogdoper, Gott sei dank, and gums here after Christmas to zing at ze Trury Lane. Chullien kifs her ten sousand bounts!"

"I wonder, now! Why, that must be the woman I heard at Warsaw two years ago—or three," said young Lord Witlow. "It was at Count Siloszech's. He'd heard her sing in the streets, with a tall black-bearded ruffian, who accompanied her on a guitar, and a little fiddling gypsy fellow. She was a handsome woman, with hair down to her knees, but stupid as an owl. She sang at Siloszech's, and all the fellows went mad and gave her their watches and diamond studs and gold scarf-pins. By gad! I never heard or saw anything like it. I don't know much about music myself—couldn't tell 'God save the Queen' from 'Pop goes the Weasel' if the people didn't get up and stand and take their hats off. but I was as mad as the rest—why, I gave her a little German-silver vinaigrette I'd just bought for my wife, hanged if I didn't—and I was only just married, you know! It's the peculiar twang of her voice, I suppose!"

And hearing all this, Little Billee made up his mind that life had still something in store for him, since he would some day hear La Svengali. Anyhow he wouldn't shoot himself till then!

Thus the night wore itself away. The Prinzessen, Comtessen, and Serene English Altessen (and other ladies of less exalted rank) departed home in cabs and carriages; and hostess and daughters went to bed. Late sitters of the ruder sex supped again, and smoked and chatted and listened to comic songs and recitations by celebrated actors. Noble dukes hobnobbed with low comedians; world-famous painters and sculptors sat at the feet of Hebrew capitalists and aitchless millionaires. Judges, cabinet ministers, eminent physicians and warriors and philosophers saw Sunday morning steal over Campden Hill and through the many windows of Mechelen Lodge, and listened to the pipe of half-awakened birds, and smelt the freshness of the dark summer dawn. And as Taffy and the Laird walked home to the Old Hummums by daylight, they felt that last night was ages ago, and that since then they had forgathered with "much there was of the best in London." And then they reflected that "much there was of the best in London" were still strangers to them—except by reputation—for there had not been time for many introductions: and this had made them feel a little out of it; and they found they hadn't had such a very good time after all. And there were no cabs. And they were tired, and their boots were tight.

And the last they had seen of Little Billee before leaving was a glimpse of their old friend in a corner of Lady Cornelys's boudoir, gravely playing cup and ball with Fred Walker for sixpences—both so rapt in the game that they were unconscious of anything else, and both playing so well (with either hand) that they might have been professional champions!

And that saturnine young sawbones, Jakes Talboys (now Sir Jakes, and one of the most genial of Her Majesty's physicians), who, sometimes after supper and champagne, was given to thoughtful, sympathetic and acute observation of his fellow-men, remarked to the Laird in a whisper that was almost convivial:

"Rather an enviable pair! Their united ages amount to forty-eight or so, their united weights to about fifteen stone, and they couldn't carry you or me between them. But if you were to roll all the other brains that have been under this roof to-night into one, you wouldn't reach the sum of their united genius. . . . I wonder which of the two is the most unhappy!"

The season over, the song-birds flown, summer on the wane, his picture, the "Moon-Dial," sent to Moses Lyon's (the picture dealer in Conduit Street), Little Billee felt the time had come to go and see his mother and sister in Devonshire, and make the sun shine twice as brightly for them during a month or so, and the dew fall softer!

And as he took a seat in a second-class carriage (it would be third in these democratic days), south corner, back to the engine, with *Silas Marner* and Darwin's *Origin of Species* (which he was reading for the third time), and *Punch* and other literature of a lighter kind to beguile

him on his journey, he felt rather bitterly how happy he could be if the little spot, or knot, or blot, or clot which paralysed that convolution of his brain where he kept his affections could but be conjured away!

The dearest mother, the dearest sister in the world, in the dearest little seaside village (or town) that ever was, and other dear people—especially Alice, sweet Alice, with hair so brown, his sister's friend, the simple, pure and pious maiden of his boyish dreams: and himself, but for that wretched little kill-joy cerebral occlusion, as sound, as healthy, as full of life and energy as he had ever been!

And when he wasn't reading *Silas Marner*, or looking out of window at the flying landscape and watching it revolve round its middle distance, (as it always seems to do), he was sympathetically taking stock of his fellow-passengers, and mildly envying them, one after another, indiscriminately!

A fat, old, wheezy philistine, with a bulbous nose and only one eye, who had a plain, sickly daughter, to whom he seemed devoted, body and soul; an old lady, who still wept furtively at recollections of the parting with her grandchildren, which had taken place at the station (they had borne up wonderfully, as grandchildren do); a consumptive curate, on the opposite corner seat by the window, whose tender, anxious wife (sitting by his side) seemed to have no thoughts in the whole world but for him; and her patient eyes were his stars of consolation, since he turned to look into them almost every minute, and always seemed a little the happier for doing so. There is no better star-gazing than that!

So Little Billee gave her up *his* corner seat, that the poor sufferer might have those stars where he could look into them comfortably without turning his head.

Indeed (as was his wont with everybody), Little Billee made himself useful and pleasant to his fellow-travellers in many ways—so many that long before they had reached their respective journeys' ends they had almost grown to love him as an old friend, and longed to know who this singularly attractive and brilliant youth, this genial, dainty, benevolent little princekin could possibly be, who was dressed so fashionably, and yet went second class, and took such kind thought of others; and they wondered at the happiness that must be his at merely being alive, and told him more of their troubles in six hours than they told many an old friend in a year.

But he told them nothing about himself—that self he was so sick of—and left them to wonder.

And at his own journey's end, the farthest end of all, he found his mother and sister waiting for him, in a beautiful little pony-carriage—his last gift—and with them sweet Alice, and in her eyes, for one brief moment, that unconscious look of love surprised which is not to be forgotten for years and years and years—which can only be seen by the eyes that meet it, and which, for the time it lasts (just a flash), makes all women's eyes look exactly the same (I'm told); and it seemed to Little Billee that, for the twentieth part of a second, Alice had looked at him with Trilby's eyes; or his mother's when that he was a little tiny boy.

It all but gave him the thrill he thirsted for! Another twentieth part of a second, perhaps, and his brain-trouble would have melted away; and Little Billee would have come into his own again—the kingdom of love!

A beautiful human eye! *Any* beautiful eye—a dog's, a deer's, a donkey's, an owl's even! To think of all that it can look, and all that it can see—all that it can even *seem*, sometimes! What a prince among gems; what a star!

But a beautiful eye that lets the broad white light of infinite space (so bewildering and garish and diffused) into one pure virgin heart, to be filtered there, and lets it out again, duly warmed, softened, concentrated, sublimated, focused to a point as in a precious stone, that it may shed itself (a love-laden effulgence) into some stray fellow-heart close by—through pupil and iris, entre quatre-z-yeux—the very elixir of life!

Alas, that such a crown-jewel should ever lose its lustre and go blind!

Not so blind or dim, however, but it can still

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see well enough to look before and after, and inward and upward, and drown itself in tears and yet not die! And that's the dreadful pity of it. And this is a quite uncalled-for digression; and I can't think why I should have gone out of my way (at considerable pains) to invent it! In fact:

"Of this 'ere song, should I be axed the reason for to show,
I don't exactly know, I don't exactly know!
But all my fancy dwells upon Nancy."

"How pretty Alice has grown, mother! Quite lovely, I think, and so nice; but she was always as nice as she could be!"

So observed Little Billee to his mother that evening as they sat in the garden and watched the crescent moon sink to the Atlantic.

"Ah, my darling Willie! If you *could* only guess how happy you would make your poor old mammy by growing fond of Alice. . . . And Blanche, too—what a joy for *her*!"

"Good heavens, mother . . . Alice is not for the like of *me*! She's for some splendid young Devon squire, six foot high and acred and whiskered within an inch of his life! . . ."

"Ah, my darling Willie, you are not of those who ask for love in vain! . . . If you only *knew* how she believes in you! She almost beats your poor old mammy at *that*!"

And that night he dreamed of Alice—that he loved her as a sweet good woman should be loved; and knew, even in his dream, that it was but a dream; but, oh, it was good! And he managed not to wake, and it was a night to be marked with a white stone! And (still in his dream) she had kissed him and healed him of his brain-trouble for ever. But when he woke next morning, alas, his brain-trouble was with him still, and he felt that no dream kiss would ever cure it—nothing but a real kiss from Alice's own pure lips!

And he rose thinking of Alice, and dressed and breakfasted thinking of her—and how fair she was, and how innocent, and how well and carefully trained up the way she should go—the beau ideal of a wife. . . . Could she possibly care for a shrimp like himself?

For in his love of outward form he could not understand that any woman who had eyes to see should ever quite condone the signs of physical weakness in man in favour of any mental gifts or graces whatsoever.

Little Greek that he was, he worshipped the athlete, and opined that all women without exception—all English women, especially—must see with the same eyes as himself.

He had once been vain and weak enough to believe in Trilby's love (with a Taffy standing by—a careless, unsusceptible Taffy, who was like unto the gods of Olympus!)—and Trilby had given him up at a word, a hint—for all his frantic clinging.

She would not have given up Taffy *pour si peu*, had Taffy but lifted a little finger! It is always "just whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad!" with the likes of Taffy . . . but Taffy hadn't even whistled! Yet still he kept thinking of Alice—and he felt he couldn't think of her well enough till he went out for a stroll by himself on a sheep-trimmed down. So he took his pipe and his Darwin, and out he strolled into the early sunshine—up the green Red Lane, past the pretty church, Alice's father's church—and there, at the gate, patiently waiting for his mistress, sat Alice's dog—an old friend of his, whose welcome was a very warm one.

Little Billee thought of Thackeray's lovely poem in *Pendennis*:

"She comes—she's here—she's past!
May heaven go with her! . . ."

Then he and the dog went on together to a little bench on the edge of the cliff—within sight of Alice's bedroom window. It was called "The Honeymooners' Bench."

"That look—that look—that look! Ah—but Trilby had looked like that, too! And there are many Taffys in Devon!"

He sat himself down and smoked and gazed at the sea below, which the sun (still in the east) had not yet filled with glare and robbed of the lovely sapphire-blue, shot with purple and dark green, that comes over it now and again of a morning on that most beautiful coast.

There was a fresh breeze from the west, and the long, slow billows broke into creamier foam than ever, which reflected itself as a tender white gleam in the blue concavities of their shining shoreward curves as they came rolling in. The sky was all of turquoise but for the smoke of a distant steamer—a long thin horizontal streak of dun—and there were little brown or white sails here and there, dotting; and the stately ships went on. . . .

Little Billee tried hard to feel all this beauty with his heart as well as his brain—as he had so often done when a boy—and cursed his insensibility out loud for at least the thousand-and-first time.

Why couldn't these waves of air and water be turned into equivalent waves of sound, that he might feel them through the only channel that reached his emotions! That one joy was still left to him—but, alas, alas, he was only a painter of pictures—and not a maker of music!

He recited "Break, break, break," to Alice's dog, who loved him and looked up into his face with sapient, affectionate eyes—and whose name, like that of so many dogs in fiction and so few in fact, was simply Tray. For Little Billee was much given to monologues out loud, and profuse quotations from his favourite bards.

Tray listened silently.

"Ah, Tray, the best thing but one to do with the sea is to paint it. The next best thing to that is to bathe in it. The best of all is to lie asleep at the bottom. How would *you* like that?

"'And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play. . . .'"

Tray's tail became as a wagging point of interrogation, and he turned his head first on one side and then on the other—his eyes fixed on Little Billee's.

"Tray, what a singularly good listener you are—and therefore what singularly good manners you've got! I suppose all dogs have!" said Little Billee; and then, in a very tender voice, he exclaimed:

"Alice, Alice, Alice!"

And Tray uttered a soft, cooing, nasal croon in his head register, though he was a baritone dog by nature, with portentous, warlike chest-notes of the jingo order.

"Tray, your mistress is a parson's daughter, and therefore twice as much of a mystery as any other woman in this puzzling world!

"Tray, if my heart weren't stopped with wax, like the ears of the companions of Ulysses when they rowed past the sirens—you've heard of Ulysses, Tray? he loved a dog—if my heart weren't stopped with wax, I should be deeply in love with your mistress; perhaps she would marry me if I asked her—there's no accounting for tastes—and I know enough of myself to know that I should make her a good husband—that I should make her happy—and I should make two other women happy besides.

"As for myself personally, Tray, it doesn't very much matter. One good woman would do as well as another, if she's equally good-looking. You doubt it? Wait till you get a pimple inside your bump of—your bump of—wherever you keep your fondnesses, Tray.

"For that's what's the matter with me—a pimple—just a little clot of blood at the root of a nerve, and no bigger than a pin's point!

"That's a small thing to cause such a lot of wretchedness and wreck a fellow's life, isn't it? Oh, curse it, curse it, curse it—every day and all day long.

"And just as small a thing will take it away, I'm told!

"Ah, grains of sand are small things—and so are diamonds! But diamond or grain of sand, only Alice has got that small thing! Alice alone, in all the world, has got the healing touch for me now; the hands, the lips, the eyes! I know it—I feel it! I dreamed it last night! She looked me well in the face, and took my hand—both hands—and kissed me, eyes and mouth, and told me how she loved me. Ah, what a dream it was! And my little clot melted away like a snowflake on the lips, and I was my old self again, after many years—and all through that kiss of a pure woman.

"I've never been kissed by a pure woman in my life—never, except by my dear mother and sister, and mothers and sisters don't count when it comes to kissing.

"Ah, sweet physician that she is, and better than all! It will all come back again with a rush, just as I dreamed, and we will have a good time together, we three! . .

"But your mistress is a parson's daughter, and believes everything she's been taught from a child, just as you do—at least, I hope so. And I like her for it—and you, too.

"She has believed her father—will she ever believe me, who think so differently? And if she does, will it be good for her?—and then, where will her father come in?

"Oh, it's a bad thing to live and no longer believe and trust in your father, Tray, to doubt either his honesty or his intelligence. For he (with your mother to help) has taught you all the best he knows, if he has been a good father—till someone else comes and teaches you better—or worse!

"And then, what are you to believe of what good still remains of all that early teaching—and how are you to sift the wheat from the chaff? . . .

"Kneel undisturbed, fair saint! I, for one, will never seek to undermine thy faith in any father, on earth or above it!

"Yes, there she kneels in her father's church, her pretty head bowed over her clasped hands, her cloak and skirts falling in happy folds about her: I see it all!

"And underneath, that poor, sweet, soft, pathetic thing of flesh and blood, the eternal woman—great heart and slender brain—for ever enslaved or enslaving, never self-sufficing, never free . . . that dear, weak, delicate shape, so cherishable, so perishable, that I've had to paint so often, and know so well by heart; and love . . . ah, how I love it! Only painter-fellows and sculptor-fellows can ever quite know the fulness of that pure love.

"There she kneels and pours forth her praise or plaint, meekly and duly. Perhaps it's for me she's praying.

"'Leave thou thy sister when she prays.'

"She believes her poor little prayer will be heard and answered somewhere up aloft. The impossible will be done. She wants what she wants badly, and prays for it so hard.

"She believes—she believes—what *doesn't* she believe, Tray?

"The world was made in six days. It is just six thousand years old. Once it all lay smothered under rain-water for many weeks, miles deep, because there were so many wicked people about somewhere down in Judee, where they didn't know everything! A costly kind of clearance! And then there was Noah, who *wasn't* wicked, and his most respectable family, and his ark—and Jonah and his whale—and Joshua and the sun, and what not. I remember it all, you see, and, oh, such wonderful things that have happened since! And there's everlasting agony for those who don't believe as she does; and yet she is happy; and good, and very kind; for the mere thought of any live creature in pain makes her wretched!

"After all, if she believes in me she'll believe in anything; let her!

" Indeed, I'm not sure that it's not rather ungainly for a pretty woman *not* to believe in all these good old cosmic taradiddles, as it is for a pretty child not to believe in Little Red Riding Hood, and Jack and the Beanstalk, and Morgiana and the Forty Thieves; we learn them at our mother's knee, and how nice they are! Let us go on believing them as long as we can, till the child grows up and the woman dies and it's all found out.

" Yes, Tray, I will be dishonest for her dear sake. I will kneel by her side if ever I have the happy chance, and ever after, night and morning, and all day long on Sundays if she wants me to! What will I *not* do for that one pretty woman who believes in *me*? I will respect even *that* belief, and do my little best to keep it alive for ever. It is much too precious an earthly boon for *me* to play ducks and drakes with. . . .

" So much for Alice, Tray—your sweet mistress and mine.

" But then, there's Alice's papa—and that's another pair of sleeves, as we say in France.

" Ought one ever to play at make-believe with a full-grown man for any consideration whatever—even though he be a parson and a possible father-in-law? *There's* a case of conscience for you!

" When I ask him for his daughter, as I must, and he asks me for my profession of faith, as he will, what can I tell him? The truth?

(And now, I regret to say, the reticent Little Billee is going to show his trusty four-footed friend the least attractive side of his many-sided nature, its modernity, its dreary scepticism—his own unhappy portion of *la maladie du siècle*). . . .

" But then, what will *he* say? What allowances will *he* make for a poor little weak-kneed, well-meaning waif of a painter-fellow like me, whose only choice lay between Mr. Darwin and the Pope of Rome, and who has chosen once and for ever—and that long ago—before he'd ever even heard of Mr. Darwin's name.

" Besides, why should he make allowances for me? I don't for him. I think no more of a parson than he does of a painter-fellow—and that's precious little, I'm afraid.

" What will he think of a man who says:

" ' Look here, the God of your belief isn't mine and never will be—but I love your daughter and she loves me, and I'm the only man to make her happy! '

" He's no Jephthah; he's made of flesh and blood, although he's a parson—and loves his daughter as much as Shylock loved his.

" Tell me, Tray—thou that livest among parsons—what man, not being a parson himself, can guess how a parson would think, an average parson, confronted by such a poser as that?

" Does he, dare he, *can* he ever think straight or simply on any subject as any other man thinks, hedged in as he is by so many limitations?

" He is as shrewd, vain, worldly, self-seeking, ambitious, jealous, censorious, and all the rest, as you or I, Tray—for all his Christian profession—and just as fond of his kith and kin!

" He is considered a gentleman—which perhaps you and I are not—unless we happen to behave as such; it is a condition of his noble calling. Perhaps it's in order to become a gentleman that he's become a parson! It's about as short a royal road as any to that enviable distinction—as short almost as Her Majesty's commission, and much safer, and much less expensive—within reach of the sons of most fairly successful butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers.

" While still a boy he has bound himself irrevocably to certain beliefs, which he will be paid to preserve and preach and enforce through life, and act up to through thick and thin—at all events in the eyes of others—even his nearest and dearest—even the wife of his bosom.

" They are his bread and butter, these beliefs—and a man mustn't quarrel with his bread and butter. But a parson must quarrel with those who don't believe as he tells them!

" Yet a few years' thinking and reading and experience of life, one would suppose, might possibly just shake his faith a little (just as though, instead of being parson he had been tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, gentleman, apothecary, ploughboy, thief), and teach him that many of these beliefs are simply childish—and some of them very wicked indeed—and most immoral.

" It is very wicked and most immoral to believe, or affect to believe, and tell others to believe that the unseen, unspeakable, unthinkable Immensity we're all part and parcel of, source of eternal, infinite, indestructible life and light and might, is a kind of wrathful, glorified and self-glorifying ogre in human shape, with human passions and most inhuman hates—who suddenly made us out of nothing one fine day—just for a freak—and made us so badly that we fell the next—and turned us adrift the day after—damned us from the very beginning—*ab ovo—ab ovo usque ad malum*—ha, ha!—and ever since, never gave us a chance!

" All-merciful Father, indeed! Why, the Prince of Darkness was an angel in comparison (and a gentleman into the bargain).

" Just think of it, Tray—a finger in every little paltry pie—an eye and an ear at every keyhole, even that of the larder, to catch us tripping and find out if we're praising loud enough, or grovelling low enough, or fasting hard enough—poor God-forsaken worms!

" And if we're naughty and disobedient, everlasting torment for us; torture of so hideous a kind that *we* wouldn't inflict it on the basest criminal, not for one single moment!

" Or else, if we're good and do as we are bid, an eternity of bliss so futile, so idle and so tame that we couldn't stand it for a week, but for thinking of its one horrible alternative, and of

our poor brother for ever and ever roasting away and howling for the drop of water he never gets.

" Everlasting flame, or everlasting dishonour—nothing between !

" Isn't it ludicrous as well as pitiful—a thing to make one snigger through one's tears ? Isn't it a grievous sin to believe in such things as these, and go about teaching and preaching them, and being paid for it—a sin to be heavily chastised, and a shame ? What a legacy !

" They were shocking bad artists, those conceited, narrow-minded Jews, those poor old doting monks and priests and bigots of the gruesome, dark age of faith ! They couldn't draw a bit—no perspective, no anatomy, no chiaro-oscuro ; and it's a woeful image they managed to evolve for us out of the depths of their fathomless ignorance, in their zeal to keep us off all the forbidden fruit we're all so fond of, because we were built like that ! And by whom ? By our Maker, I suppose (who also made the forbidden fruit, and made it very nice—and put it so conveniently for you and me to see and smell and reach, Tray—and sometimes even pick, alas !).

" And even at that it's a failure, this precious image ! Only the very foolish little birds are frightened into good behaviour. The naughty ones laugh and wink at each other, and pull out its hair and beard when nobody's looking, and build their nests out of the straw it's stuffed with (the naughty little birds in black, especially) and pick up what they want under its very nose, and thrive uncommonly well ; and the good ones fly away out of sight, and some day, perhaps, find a home in some happy, useful fatherland far away where the Father isn't a bit like this. Who knows ?

" And I'm one of the good little birds, Tray—at least, I hope so. And that unknown Father lives in me whether I will or no, and I love Him whether He be or not, just because I can't help it, and with the best and bravest love that can be—the perfect love that believeth no evil, and seeketh no reward and casteth out fear. For I'm His father as much as He's mine, since I've conceived the thought of Him after my own fashion !

" And He lives in you, too, Tray—you and all your kind. Yes, good dog, you king of beasts, I see it in your eyes. . . .

" Ah, bon Dieu Père, le Dieu des bonnes gens ! Oh, if we only knew for *certain*, Tray, what martyrdom would we not endure, you and I, with a happy smile and a grateful heart—for sheer *love* of such a father ! How little should *we* care for the things of this earth !

" But the poor parson ?

" He must willy-nilly go on believing, or affecting to believe, just as he is told, *word for word*, or else good-bye to his wife and children's bread and butter, his own preferment, perhaps even his very gentility—that gentility of which his Master thought so little, and he and his are apt to think so much—with possibly the Archbishopric of Canterbury at the end of it, the *bâton de maréchal* that lies in every clerical knapsack.

" What a temptation ! One is but human !

" So how can he be honest without believing certain things, to believe which (without shame) one must be as simple as a little child ; as, by the way, he is so cleverly told to be in these matters, and so cleverly tells us—and so seldom is himself on any other matter whatever—his own interests, other people's affairs, the world, the flesh and the devil ! And that's clever of him, too. . .

" And if he chooses to be as simple as a little child, why shouldn't I treat him as a little child, for his own good, and fool him to the top of his little bent for his dear daughter's sake, that I may make her happy and thereby him, too ?

" And if he's *not* quite so simple as all that, and makes artful little compromises with his conscience—for a good purpose, of course—why shouldn't I make artful little compromises with mine, and for a better purpose still, and try to get what I want in the way *he* does ? I want to marry his daughter far worse than he can ever want to live in a palace and ride in a carriage and pair with a mitre on the panels.

" If he *cheats*, why shouldn't I cheat, too ?

" If *he* cheats, he cheats everybody all round—the wide, wide world, and something wider and higher still that can't be measured, something in himself. *I* only cheat *him* !

" If he cheats, he cheats for the sake of very worldly things indeed—tithes, honours, influence, power, authority, social consideration and respect—not to speak of bread and butter ! *I* only cheat for the love of a lady fair—and cheating for cheating, I like my cheating best.

" So, whether he cheats or not, I'll——

" Confound it, what would old Taffy do in such a case, I wonder ? . .

" Oh, bother, it's no good wondering what old Taffy would do.

" Taffy never wants to marry *anybody's* daughter ; he doesn't even want to paint her ! He only wants to paint his beastly ragamuffins and thieves and drunkards, and be left alone.

" Besides, Taffy's as simple as a little child himself, and couldn't fool anyone, and wouldn't if he could—not even a parson. But if anyone tries to fool *him*, my eyes ! don't he cut up rough and call names and kick up a shindy, and even knock people down ! That's the worst of fellows like Taffy. They're too good for this world and too solemn. They're impossible, and lack all sense of humour. In point of fact, Taffy's a *gentleman*—poor fellow ! *et puis voilà !*

" I'm not simple—worse luck ; and I can't knock people down—I only wish I could ! I can only paint them—and not even *that* ' as they really are ' ! . . . Good old Taffy ! . .

" Faint heart never won fair lady !

" Oh, happy, happy thought—I'll be brave and win !

" I can't knock people down, or do doughty deeds, but I'll be brave in my own little way—the only way I can. . . .

" I'll simply lie through thick and thin—I must—I will—nobody need ever be a bit the wiser! I can do more good by lying than by telling the truth, and make more deserving people happy, including myself and the sweetest girl alive—the end shall justify the means: that's my excuse, my only excuse, and this lie of mine is on so stupendous a scale that it will have to last me for life. It's my only one, but it's name is *Lion*, and I'll never tell another as long as I live.

" And now that I know what temptation really is, I'll never think any harm of any parson any more . . . never, never, never! "

So the little man went on, as if he knew all about it, had found it all out for himself, and nobody else had ever found it out before, and I am not responsible for his ways of thinking (which are not necessarily my own).

It must be remembered, in extenuation, that he was very young, and not very wise: no philosopher, no scholar—just a painter of lovely pictures; only that and nothing more. Also, that he was reading Mr. Darwin's immortal book for the third time, and it was a little too strong for him; also, that all this happened in the early sixties, long ere Religion had made up her mind to meet Science half-way and hob-nob and kiss and be friends. Alas, before such a lying down of the lion and the lamb can ever come to pass, Religion will have to perform a larger share of the journey than half, I fear!

Then, still carried away by the flood of his own eloquence (for he had never had such an innings as this, nor such a listener), he again apostrophised the dog Tray, who had been growing somewhat inattentive (like the reader, perhaps), in language more beautiful than ever:

" Oh, to be like you, Tray—and secrete love and goodwill from morn till night, from night till morning—like saliva, without effort, with never a moment's cessation of flow, even in disgrace and humiliation! How much better to love than to be loved—to love as you do, my Tray—so warmly, so easily, so unremittingly—to forgive all wrongs and neglect and injustice so quickly and so well—and forget a kindness never! Lucky dog that you are!

" ' Oh, could I feel as I have felt, or be as I have been,
'Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanished scene,
'As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish tho' they be,
'So 'midst this withered waste of life those tears would flow to me! '

" What do you think of those lines, Tray? I *love* them, because my mother taught them to me when I was about your age—six years old, or seven, and before the bard who wrote them had fallen, like Lucifer, son of the morning! Have you ever heard of Lord Byron, Tray? He, too, like Ulysses, loved a dog, and many people think that's about the best there is to be said of him nowadays! Poor Humpty Dumpty! Such a swell as he once was! Not all the king's horses, nor all the——"

Here Tray jumped up suddenly and bolted—he saw someone else he was fond of, and ran to meet him. It was the vicar, coming out of his vicarage.

A very nice-looking vicar—fresh, clean, alert, well tanned by sun and wind and weather—a youngish vicar still; tall, stout, gentlemanlike, shrewd, kindly, worldly, a trifle pompous and authoritative more than a trifle; not much given to abstract speculation, and thinking fifty times more of any sporting and orthodox young country squire, well-inched and well-acred (and well-whiskered) than of all the painters in Christendom.

" ' When Greeks joined Greeks, then was the tug of war,' " thought Little Billee, and he felt a little uncomfortable. Alice's father had never loomed so big and impressive before, or so distressingly nice to look at.

" Welcome, my Apelles, to your ain countree, which is growing quite proud of you, I declare! Young Lord Archie Waring was saying only last night that he wished he had half your talent! He's *crazed* about painting, you know, and actually wants to be a painter himself! The poor dear old marquis is quite sore about it! "

With this happy exordium the parson stopped and shook hands; and they both stood for a while, looking seaward. The parson said the usual things about the sea—its blueness, its greyness, its greenness, its beauty, its sadness, its treachery.

" ' Who shall put forth on thee,
'Unfathomable sea! ' "

" Who, indeed! " answered Little Billee, quite agreeing. " I vote *we* don't, at all events.' So they turned inland.

The parson said the usual things about the land (from the country-gentleman's point of view), and the talk began to flow quite pleasantly, with quoting of the usual poets, and capping of quotations in the usual way—for they had known each other many years, both here and in London. Indeed, the vicar had once been Little Billee's tutor.

And thus, amicably, they entered a small wooded hollow. Then the vicar, turning of a sudden his full blue gaze on the painter, asked, sternly:

" What book's that you've got in your hand, Willie? "

" A—a—it's the *Origin of Species*, by Charles Darwin. I'm very f-f-fond of it. I'm reading it for the third time. . . . It's very g-g-good. It *accounts* for things, you know."

Then, after a pause, and still more sternly:

" What place of worship do you most attend in London—especially of an evening, William? "

Then stammered Little Billee, all self-control forsaking him:

"I d-d-don't attend any place of worship at all—morning, afternoon or evening. I've long given up going to church altogether. I can only be frank with you; I'll tell you why. . . ."

And as they walked along the talk drifted on to very momentous subjects indeed, and led, unfortunately, to a serious falling out—for which probably both were to blame—and closed in a distressful way at the other end of the little wooded hollow—a way most sudden and unexpected, and quite grievous to relate. When they emerged into the open, the parson was quite white, and the painter crimson.

"Sir," said the parson, squaring himself up to more than his full height and breadth and dignity, his face big with righteous wrath, his voice full of strong menace, "sir, you're—you're a—you're a *thief*, sir, a *thief*! You're trying to *rob me of my Saviour!* Never you dare to darken *my* door-step again!"

"Sir," said Little Billee, with a bow, "if it comes to calling names, you're—you're a—— No, you're Alice's father, and whatever else you are besides, I'm another for trying to be honest with a parson, so good-morning to you."

And each walked off in an opposite direction, stiff as pokers, and Tray stood between, looking first at one receding figure, then at the other, disconsolate.

And thus Little Billee found out that he could no more lie than he could fly. And so he did not marry sweet Alice after all, and no doubt it was ordered for her good and his. But there was tribulation for many days in the house of Bagot, and for many months in one tender, pure and pious bosom.

And the best and the worst of it all is that, not very many years after, the good vicar—more fortunate than most clergymen who dabble in stocks and shares—grew suddenly very rich through a lucky speculation in Irish beer, and suddenly, also, took to thinking seriously about things (as a man of business should)—more seriously than he had ever thought before. So at least the story goes in North Devon, and it is not so new as to be incredible. Little doubts grew into big ones—big doubts resolved themselves into downright negations. He quarrelled with his bishop; he quarrelled with his dean; he even quarrelled with his "poor dear old marquis," who died before there was time to make it up again. And finally he felt it his duty, in conscience, to secede from a Church which had become too narrow to hold him, and took himself and his belongings to London, where at least he could breathe. But there he fell into a great disquiet, for the long habit of feeling himself always *en évidence*—of being looked up to and listened to without contradiction; of exercising influence and authority in spiritual matters (and even temporal); of impressing women, especially, with his commanding presence, his fine sonorous voice, his lofty brow, so serious and smooth, his soft, big, waving hands, which soon lost their country tan—all this had grown as second nature to him, the breath of his nostrils, a necessity of his life. So he rose to be the most popular Positivist preacher of his day, and pretty broad at that.

But his dear daughter Alice, she stuck to the old faith, and married a venerable High Church archdeacon, who very cleverly clutched at and caught her and saved her for himself just as she stood shivering on the very brink of Rome; and they were neither happy nor unhappy together—*un ménage bourgeois, ni beau ni laid, ni bon ni mauvais.* And thus, alas, the bond of religious sympathy that counts for so much in united families no longer existed between father and daughter, and the heart's division divided them. *Ce que c'est que de nous! . . .* The pity of it!

And so no more of sweet Alice with hair so brown.

¶

BEHOLD our three musketeers of the brush once more re-united in Paris, famous, after long years.

In emulation of the good Dumas, we will call it "cinq ans après." It was a little more.

Taffy stands for Porthos and Athos rolled into one, since he is big and good-natured, and strong enough to "assommer un homme d'un coup de poing," and also stately and solemn, of aristocratic and romantic appearance, and not too fat—not too much ongbongpwang, as the Laird called it—and also he does not dislike a bottle of wine, or even two, and looks as if he had a history.

The Laird, of course, is D'Artagnan, since he sells his pictures well, and by the time we are writing of has already become an Associate of the Royal Academy; like Quentin Durward, this D'Artagnan was a Scotsman:

"Ah, wasna he a Roguey, this piper of Dundee!"

And Little Billee, the dainty friend of Duchesses, must stand for Aramis, I fear! It will not do to push the simile too far; besides, unlike the good Dumas, one has a conscience. One does not play ducks and drakes with historical facts, or tamper with historical personages. And if Athos, Porthos and Co. are not historical by this time, I should like to know who are!

Well, so are Taffy, the Laird and Little Billee—*tout ce qu'il y a de plus historique!*

Our three friends, well-groomed, frock-coated, shirt-collared within an inch of their lives, duly scarfed and scarf-pinned, chimney-pot-hatted, and most beautifully trousered, and balmorally booted, or neatly spatted (or whatever was most correct at the time), are breakfasting together on coffee, rolls and butter at a little round table in the huge courtyard of an immense caravansérai, paved with asphalt and covered

in at the top with a glazed roof that admits the sun and keeps out the rain—and the air.

A magnificent old man as big as Taffy, in black cloth coat and breeches and black silk stockings, and a large metal chain round his neck and chest, looks down like Jove from a broad flight of marble steps—as though to welcome the coming guests, who arrive in cabs and railway omnibuses through a huge archway on the boulevard; or to speed those who part through a lesser archway opening on to a side street.

"Bon voyage, messieurs et dames!"

At countless other little tables other voyagers are breakfasting or ordering breakfast; or, having breakfasted, are smoking and chatting and looking about. It is a babel of tongues—the cheerfullest, busiest, merriest scene in the world, apparently the costly place of rendezvous for all wealthy Europe and America; an atmosphere of bank-notes and gold.

Already Taffy has recognised (and been recognised by) half a dozen old fellow-Crimeans, of unmistakable military aspect like himself; and three canny Scotsmen have discreetly greeted the Laird; and as for Little Billee, he is constantly jumping up from his breakfast and running to this table or that, drawn by some irresistible British smile of surprising and delighted female recognition: "What, *you* here? How nice! Come over to hear La Svengali, I suppose?"

At the top of the marble steps is a long terrace, with seats and people sitting, from which tall glazed doors, elaborately carved and gilded, give access to luxurious drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, reading-rooms, lavatories, postal and telegraph offices; and all round and about are huge square green boxes, out of which grow tropical and exotic evergreens all the year round—with beautiful names that I have forgotten. And leaning against these boxes are placards announcing what theatrical or musical entertainments will take place in Paris that day or night; and the biggest of these placards (and the most fantastically decorated) informs the cosmopolite world that Madame Svengali intends to make her first appearance in Paris that very evening at nine punctually, in the Cirque des Bashibazoucks, Rue St. Honoré!

Our friends had only arrived the previous night, but they had managed to secure stalls a week beforehand. No places were any longer to be got for love or money. Many people had come to Paris on purpose to hear La Svengali—many famous musicians from England and everywhere else—but they would have to wait many days.

The fame of her was like a rolling snowball that had been rolling all over Europe for the last two years—wherever there was snow to be picked up in the shape of golden ducats.

Their breakfast over, Taffy, the Laird and Little Billee, cigar in mouth, arm-in-arm, the huge Taffy in the middle (*comme autrefois*), crossed the sunshiny boulevard into the shade, and went down the Rue de la Paix, through the Place Vendôme and the Rue Castiglione to the Rue de Rivoli—quite leisurely, and with a tender midriff-warming sensation of freedom and delight at almost every step.

Arrived at the corner pastrycook's, they finished the stumps of their cigars as they looked at the well-remembered show in the window; then they went in and had: Taffy a Madeleine, the Laird a Baba, and Little Billee a Savarin—and each, I regret to say, a liqueur-glass of *rhum de la Jamaïque*.

After this they sauntered through the Tuileries Gardens, and by the quay to their favourite Pont des Arts, and looked up and down the river—*comme autrefois!*

It is an enchanting prospect at any time and under any circumstances, but on a beautiful morning in mid-October, when you haven't seen it for five years and are still young, and almost every stock and stone that meets your eye, every sound, every scent, has some sweet and subtle reminder for you——

Let the reader have no fear. I will not attempt to describe it. I shouldn't know where to begin (nor when to leave off!).

Not but what many changes had been wrought; many old landmarks were missing. And among them, as they found out a few minutes later, and much to their chagrin, the good old Morgue!

They inquired of a *gardien de la paix*, who told them that a new Morgue—"une bien jolie Morgue, ma foi!"—and much more commodious and comfortable than the old one, had been built beyond Notre Dame, a little to the right.

"Messieurs devraient voir ça—on y est très bien!"

But Notre Dame herself was still there, and La Sainte Chapelle and Le Pont Neuf, and the equestrian statue of Henri IV. *C'est toujours ça!*

And as they gazed and gazed, each framed unto himself, mentally, a little picture of the Thames they had just left—and thought of Waterloo Bridge and St. Paul's and London—but felt no home-sickness whatever.

And looking down the river westward there was but little change.

On the left-hand side the terraces and garden of the Hôtel de la Rochemartel (the sculptured entrance of which was in the Rue de Lille) still overtopped the neighbouring houses and shaded the quay with tall trees, whose lightly falling leaves yellowed the pavement for at least a hundred yards of the frontage—or backage, rather; for this was but the rear of that stately palace.

"I wonder if l'Zouzou has come into his dukedom yet?" said Taffy.

And Taffy the realist, Taffy the modern of moderns, also said many beautiful things about old historical French dukedoms; which, in

-pite of their plentifulness, were so much more picturesque than English ones, and constituted a far more poetical and romantic link with the past; partly on account of their beautiful, high-sounding names!

"Amaury de Brissac de Roncesvaulx de la Rochemartel-Boisségur! What a generous mouthful! Why the very sound of it is redolent of the twelfth century! Not even Howard of Norfolk can beat that!"

For Taffy was getting sick of "this ghastly thin-faced time of ours," as he sadly called it (quoting from a strange and very beautiful poem called "Faustine," which had just appeared in the *Spectator*—and which our three enthusiasts already knew by heart), and beginning to love all things that were old and regal and rotten and forgotten and of bad repute, and to long to paint them just as they really were.

"Ah, they managed these things better in France, especially in the twelfth century and even the thirteenth!" said the Laird. "Still, Howard of Norfolk isn't bad at a pinch—*fole de myoo!*" he continued, winking at Little Billee. And they promised themselves that they would leave cards on Zouzou, and if he wasn't a duke, invite him to dinner; and also Dodor, if they could manage to find him.

Then along the quay and up the Rue de Seine, and by well-remembered little mystic ways to the old studio in the Place St. Anatole des Arts.

¶

HERE they found many changes. A row of new houses on the north side, by Baron Haussmann—the well-named—a boulevard was being constructed right through the place. But the old house had been respected, and looking up, they saw the big north window of their good old abode, blindless and blank and black, but for a white placard in the middle of it with the words: "A louer. Un atelier, et une chambre à coucher."

They entered the courtyard through the little door in the porte cochère, and beheld Madame Vinard standing on the step of her loge, her arms akimbo, giving orders to her husband—who was sawing logs for firewood, as usual at that time of the year—and telling him he was the most helpless log of the lot.

She gave them one look, threw up her arms and rushed at them, saying: "Ah, mon Dieu! les trois Angliches!"

And they could not have complained of any lack of warmth in her greeting, or in Monsieur Vinard's.

"Ah, mais quel bonheur de vous revoir! Et comme vous avez bonne mine, tous! Et Monsieur Litrebili, donc! il a grandi!" etc., etc. "Mais vous allez boire la goutte avant tout—vite, Vinard! Le ratafia de cassis que Monsieur Durien nous a envoyé la semaine dernière!"

And they were taken into the loge and made free of it—welcomed like prodigal sons; a fresh bottle of black-currant brandy was tapped, and did duty for the fatted calf. It was an ovation, and made quite a stir in the Quartier.

Le Retour des trois Angliches—cinq ans après!

She told them all the news: about Bouchardy; Papelard; Jules Guinot, who was now in the Ministère de la Guerre; Barizel, who had given up the arts and gone into his father's business (umbrellas); Durien, who had married six months ago, and had a superb atelier in the Rue Taitbout, and was coining money; about her own family—Aglaë, who was going to be married to the son of the charbonnier at the corner of the Rue de la Canicule—"un bon mariage; bien solide!" Niniche, who was studying the piano at the Conservatoire, and had won the silver medal; Isidore, who, alas, had gone to the bad—"perdu par les femmes! un si joli garçon, vous concevez! ça ne lui a pas porté bonheur, par exemple!" And yet she was proud, and said his father would never have had the pluck!

"À dix-huit ans, pensez donc!"

"And that good Monsieur Carrel; he is dead, you know! Ah, messieurs savaient ça? Yes, he died at Dieppe, his natal town, during the winter, from the consequences of an indigestion—que voulez-vous! He always had the stomach so feeble! . . . Ah, the beautiful interment, messieurs! Five thousand people! in spite of the rain! Car il pleuvait averse, And M. le Maire and his adjunct walking behind the hearse, and the gendarmerie and the douaniers, and a bataillon of the douzième chasseurs-à-pied, with their music, and all the sapper-pumpers, en grande tenue with their beautiful brass helmets! All the town was there, following: so there was nobody left to see the procession go by! q'c'était beau! Mon Dieu, q'c'était beau! c'que j'ai pleuré, d'voir ça! n'est-ce-pas, Vinard?"

"Dame, oui, ma biche! j'crois bien! It might have been Monsieur le Maire himself that one was interring in person!"

"Ah, ça! voyons, Vinard; thou'rt not going to compare the Maire of Dieppe to a painter like Monsieur Carrel?"

"Certainly not, ma biche! But still, M. Carrel was a great man all the same, in his way.

"Mon Dieu! comme il est idiot, ce Vinard—of a stupidity to cut with a knife! Why, thou might'st almost be a Mayor thyself, sacred imbecile that thou art!"

And an animated discussion arose between husband and wife as to the respective merits of a country mayor on one side and a famous painter and a member of the Institute on the other, during which *les trois Angliches* were left out in the cold. When Madame Vinard had sufficiently routed her husband, which did not take very long, she turned to them again,

and told them that she had started a *magasin de bric-à-brac*, " vous verrez ça ! "

Yes, the studio had been to let for three months. Would they like to see it ? Here were the keys. They would, of course, prefer to see it by themselves, alone ; " je comprends ça ! et vous verrez ce que vous verrez ! " Then they must come and drink once more again the drop, and inspect her *magasin de bric-à-brac*.

So they went up, all three, and let themselves into the old place where they had been so happy, and one of them for a while so miserable !

It was changed indeed.

Bare of all furniture, for one thing ; shabby and unswept, with a pathetic air of dilapidation, spoliation, desecration, and a musty, shut-up smell ; the window so dirty you could hardly see the new houses opposite ; the floor a disgrace !

All over the walls were caricatures in charcoal and white chalk, with more or less incomprehensible legends ; very vulgar and trivial and coarse, some of them, and pointless for *trois Angliches*.

But among these (touching to relate) they found, under a square of plate-glass that had been fixed on the wall by means of an oak frame, Little Billee's old black-and-white-and red chalk sketch of Trilby's left foot, as fresh as if it had been done only yesterday ! Over it was written : " Souvenir de la Grande Trilby, par W. B. (Litrebili)."

Taffy drew a long breath into his manly bosom. His huge frame thrilled with tenderness and pity and fond remembrance, and he said to himself (letting out his breath) : " Dear, dear Trilby ! Ah, if you had only cared for *me*, *I* wouldn't have let you give me up—not for anyone on earth. *You* were the mate for *me* ! "

And that, as the reader has guessed long ago, was big Taffy's " history."

The Laird was also deeply touched, and could not speak. Had he been in love with Trilby, too ? Had he ever been in love with anyone ?

He couldn't say. But he thought of Trilby's sweetness and unselfishness, her gaiety, her innocent kissings and caressings, her drollery and frolicsome grace, her way of filling whatever place she was in with her presence, the charming light and the genial sound of her ; and felt that no girl, no woman, no lady he had ever seen yet was a match for this poor waif and stray, this long-legged, cancan-dancing, Quartier Latin grisette, blanchisseuse de fin, " and Heaven knows what besides ! "

" Hang it all ! " he mentally ejaculated, " I wish to goodness I'd married her *myself* ! "

Little Billee said nothing either. He felt unhappier than he had ever once felt for five long years—to think that he could gaze on such a memento as this, a thing so strongly personal to himself, with dry eyes and a quiet pulse, and he unemotionally, dispassionately, wished himself dead and buried for at least the thousand-and-first time !

All three possessed casts of Trilby's hands and feet, and photographs of herself. But nothing so charmingly suggestive of Trilby as this little masterpiece of a true artist, this happy fluke of a happy moment. It was Trilbyness itself, as the Laird thought, and should not be suffered to perish.

They took the keys back to Madame Vinard in silence.

She said : " Vous avez vu—n'est-ce pas, messieurs ?—le pied de Trilby ! c'est bien gentil ! C'est Monsieur Durien qui a fait mettre le verre, quand vous êtes partis ; et Monsieur Guinot qui a composé *l'épitaphe*. Pauvre Trilby ! qu'est-ce qu'elle est devenue ! comme elle était bonne fille, hein ? et si belle ! et comme elle était vive elle était vive elle vive ! Et comme elle vous aimait tous bien—et surtout Monsieur Litrebili—n'est-ce pas ? "

Then she insisted on giving them each another liqueur-glass of Durien's ratafia de cassis, and took them to see her collection of *bric-à-brac* across the yard, a gorgeous show, and explained everything about it—how she had begun in quite a small way, but was making it a big business.

" Voyez cette pendule ! It is of the time of Louis Onze, who gave it with his own hands to Madame de Pompadour (!). I bought it at a sale in——"

" Combiang ? " said the Laird.

" C'est cent-cinquante francs, monsieur—c'est bien bon marché—une véritable occasion, et——"

" Je prong ! " said the Laird, meaning, " I take it ! "

But here Taffy took the Laird by the arm and dragged him by force out of this too seductive siren's cave.

The Laird told her where to send his purchases, and with many expressions of love and goodwill on both sides, they tore themselves away from Monsieur et Madame Viniard.

The Laird, however, rushed back for a minute, and hurriedly whispered to Madame Vinard : " Oh—er—le piay de Trilby—sur le mure, vous savvy—avec le verre et toot le reste—coopy le mure—comprenny ? . . . Combiang ? "

" Ah, monsieur ! " said Madame Vinard—" c'est un peu difficile, vous savez—couper un mur comme ça ! On parlera au propriétaire si vous voulez, et ça pourrait peut-être s'arranger, si c'est en vois ! seulement il fau——"

" Je prong ! " said the Laird, and waved his hand in farewell.

¶

THEY went up the Rue Vielle des Trois Mauvais Ladres, and found that about twenty yards of a high wall had been pulled down—just at the bend where the Laird had seen the last of Trilby as she turned round and kissed her hand to him—and they beheld, within, a quaint and ancient

(*Continued on page 150*)

Preparing for Baby

DURING the weeks before baby arrives the wise mother-to-be makes quite sure **that she will be able to give her baby the inestimable benefits of maternal feeding.**

Doctors have proved that the breast-fed baby not only has many more chances of living than the artificially-fed baby but is also safeguarded against nutritional diseases, such as rickets, and grows up strong and sturdy.

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long-neglected garden, a grey old garden, with tall, warty, black-boled trees, and damp, green, mossy paths that lost themselves under the brown and yellow leaves and mould and muck which had drifted into heaps here and there, the accumulation of years — a queer old faded pleasance, with wasted bowers and dilapidated carved stone benches, and weather-beaten discoloured marble statues—noseless, armless, earless fauns and hamadryads! And at the end of it, in a tumble-down state of utter ruin, a still inhabited little house, with shabby blinds and window-curtains, and broken window-panes mended with brown paper—a Pavillon de Flore, that must have been quite beautiful a hundred years ago—the once mysterious love-resort of long-buried abbés with light hearts, and well-forgotten lords and ladies gay—red-heeled, patched, powdered, frivolous and shameless, but, oh, how charming to the imagination of the nineteenth century!

How often they had speculated on what lay hidden behind that lofty old brick wall, and now this melancholy little peep into the once festive past, the touching sight of this odd old poverty-stricken abode of Heaven knows what present grief and desolation, which a few strokes of the pickaxe had laid bare, seemed to chime in with their own grey mood that had been so bright and sunny an hour ago; and they went on their way quite dejectedly, for a stroll through the Luxembourg Gallery and Gardens.

Then the Laird suggested an omelet at the Café de l'Odéon. But Taffy said, in his masterful way: "Damn the Café de l'Odéon!"

And hailing a little open fly, they drove to Ledoyen's, or some such place, in the Champs Elysées, where they feasted as became three prosperous Britons out for a holiday in Paris—three irresponsible musketeers, lords of themselves and Lutetia, *beati possidentes!*—and afterwards had themselves driven in an open carriage and pair through the Bois de Boulogne to the fête de St. Cloud (or what still remained of it, for it lasts six weeks), the scene of so many of Dodor's and Zouzou's exploits in past years, and found it more amusing than the Luxembourg Gardens; the lively and irrepressible spirit of Dodor seemed to pervade it still.

When they came back to the hotel to dress and dine, the Laird found he wanted a pair of white gloves for the concert—"Oon pair de gong blong," as he called it—and they walked along the boulevards till they came to a haberdasher's shop of very good and prosperous appearance, and, going in, were received graciously by the "patron," a portly little bourgeois, who waved them to a tall and aristocratic and very well-dressed young commis behind the counter, saying: "Une paire de gants blancs pour monsieur."

And what was the surprise of our three friends in recognising Dodor!

The gay Dodor, Dodor *l'irrésistible*, quite unembarrassed by his position, was exuberant in his delight at seeing them again, and introduced them to the patron and his wife and daughter, Monsieur, Madame and Mademoiselle Passefil. And it soon became pretty evident that in spite of his humble employment in that house, he was a great favourite in that family, and especially with mademoiselle.

Indeed, Monsieur Passefil invited our three heroes to stay and dine then and there; but they compromised matters by asking Dodor to come and dine with *them* at the hotel, and he accepted with alacrity.

Thanks to Dodor, the dinner was a very lively one, and they soon forgot the regretful impressions of the day.

They learned that he hadn't got a penny in the world, and had left the army, and had for two years kept the books at le père Passefil's and served his customers, and won his good opinion and his wife's, and especially his daughter's; and that soon he was to be not only his employer's partner, but his son-in-law; and that, in spite of his impecuniosity, he had managed to impress them with the fact that in marrying a Rigolot de Lafarce she was making a very splendid match indeed!

"And how about l'Zouzou?" asked Little Billee.

"Ah, old Gontran! I don't see much of him. We no longer quite move in the same circles, you know; not that he's proud, or me either, but he's a sub-lieutenant in the Guides—an officer!

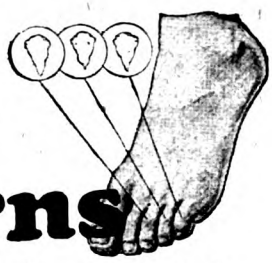
Then he gave them news of other old friends; and they did not part till it was time for them to go to the Cirque des Bashibazoucks, and after they had arranged to dine with his future family on the following day.

In the Rue St. Honoré was a long double file of cabs and carriages slowly moving along to the portals of that huge hall, Le Cirque des Bashibazoucks. Is it there still, I wonder? I don't mind betting not! Just at this period of the Second Empire there was a mania for demolition and remolition (if there is such a word), and I have no doubt my Parisian readers would search the Rue St. Honoré for the Salle des Bashibazoucks in vain!

Our friends were shown to their stalls, and looked round in surprise. This was before the days of the Albert Hall, and they had never been in such a big place of the kind before, or one so regal in aspect, so gorgeously imperial with white and gold and crimson velvet, so dazzling with light, so crammed with people from floor to roof, and cramming itself still.

A platform carpeted with crimson cloth had been erected in front of the gates where the horses had once used to come in, and their fair riders, and the two jolly English clowns; and the beautiful nobleman with the long frock-coat and brass buttons and soft high boots and four-in-hand whip—*la chambrière.*

(*Continued on page 152*)



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DR. CASSELL'S TABLETS

In front of this was a lower stand for the orchestra. The circus itself was filled with stalls—*stalles d'orchestre*. A pair of crimson curtains hid the entrance to the platform at the back, and by each of these stood a small page, ready to draw it aside and admit the diva.

The entrance to the orchestra was by a small door under the platform, and some thirty or forty chairs and music-stands, grouped around the conductor's *estrade*, were waiting for the band.

Little Billee looked round, and recognised many countrymen and countrywomen of his own—many great musical celebrities especially, whom he had often met in London. Tiers upon tiers of people rose up all round in a widening circle, and lost themselves in a dazy mist of light at the top—it was like a picture by Martin! In the imperial box were the English ambassador and his family, with an august British personage sitting in the middle, in front, his broad blue ribbon across his breast and his opera glass to his royal eyes.

Little Billee had never felt so excited, so exhilarated by such a show before, nor so full of eager anticipation. He looked at his programme, and saw that the Hungarian band (the first that had yet appeared in Western Europe, I believe) would play an overture of gypsy dances. Then Madame Svengali would sing "un air connu, sans accompagnement," and afterwards other airs, including the "Nussbaum" of Schumann (for the first time in Paris, it seemed). Then a rest of ten minutes; then more *csárdás*; then the diva would sing "Malbrouck s'en va-t'en guerre," of all things in the world! and finish up with "un impromptu de Chopin, sans paroles."

Truly a somewhat incongruous bill of fare.

Close on the stroke of nine the musicians came in and took their seats. They were dressed in the foreign hussar uniform that has now become so familiar. The first violin had scarcely sat down before our friends recognised in him their old friend Gecko.

Just as the clock struck, Svengali, in irreproachable evening dress, tall and stout and quite splendid in appearance, notwithstanding his long black mane (which had been curled), took his place at his desk. Our friends would have known him at a glance, in spite of the wonderful alteration time and prosperity had wrought in his outward man.

He bowed right and left to the thunderous applause that greeted him, gave his three little bâton-taps, and the lovely music began at once. We have grown accustomed to strains of this kind during the last twenty years, but they were new then, and their strange seduction was a surprise as well as an enchantment.

Besides, no such band as Svengali's had ever been heard; and in listening to this overture the immense crowd almost forgot that it was a mere preparation for a great musical event, and tried to encore it. But Svengali merely turned round and bowed—there were to be no encores that night.

Then a moment of silence and breathless suspense—curiosity on tiptoe!

Then the two little page-boys each drew a silken rope, and the curtains parted and looped themselves up on each side symmetrically, and a tall female figure appeared, clad in what seemed like a classical dress of cloth of gold, embroidered with garnets and beetles' wings; her snowy arms and shoulders bare, a gold coronet of stars on her head, her thick light brown hair tied behind and flowing all down her back to nearly her knees, like those ladies in hair-dressers' shops who sit with their backs to the plate-glass window to advertise the merits of some particular hair-wash.

She walked slowly down to the front, her hands hanging at her sides in quite a simple fashion, and made a slight inclination of her head and body towards the imperial box, and then to right and left. Her lips and cheeks were rouged, her dark level eye-brows nearly met at the bridge of her short high nose. Through her parted lips you could see her large glistening white teeth; her grey eyes looked straight at Svengali.

Her face was thin, and had a rather haggard expression, in spite of its artificial freshness; but its contour was divine, and its character so tender, so humble, so touchingly simple and sweet, that one melted at the sight of her. No such magnificent or seductive apparition has ever been seen before or since on any stage or platform—not even Miss Ellen Terry as the priestess of Artemis in the late laureate's play, *The Cup*.

The house rose at her as she came down to the front; and she bowed again to right and left, and put her hand to her heart quite simply and with a most winning natural gesture, an adorable *gaucherie*—like a graceful and unconscious school-girl, quite innocent of stage deportment.

It was Trilby!

Trilby the tone deaf, who couldn't sing one single note in tune! Trilby, who couldn't tell a C from an F!!

What was going to happen?

(*To be continued in next month's "Argosy."*)

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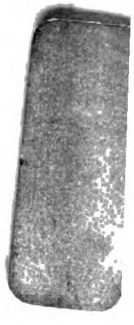

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